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*In this Issue:*

The Re-establishment of Portuguese factories  
on the Costa da Mina to the mid-Eighteenth  
Century

*A. F. C. Ryder*

The Establishment of British Administration  
in the Urhobo Country (1891 - 1913)

*A. Salubi*

Akori Beads

*R. Mauny*

Expansion on the Benue 1830 - 1900

*A. H. M. Kirk-Greene*

**RESEARCH NOTES**

**BOOK REVIEWS**





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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PORTUGUESE FACTORIES ON THE COSTA DA MINA TO THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, by A. F. C. Ryder, B.A., D.Phil. (Oxon.) .. ..	157
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN THE URHOB0 COUNTRY (1891-1913), by A. Salubi .. ..	184
AKORI BEADS, by R. Mauny .. .. .	210
EXPANSION ON THE BENUE 1830-1900, by A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, M.A. (Cantab.) .. ..	215
 RESEARCH NOTES:	
Source Material for the History of the Western Sudan (Submitted by H. F. C. Smith) .. ..	238
 BOOK REVIEWS:	
K. G. Davies, <i>The Royal African Company</i> . by V. W. Treadwell .. .. .	249
H. Alimen, <i>The Prehistory of Africa</i> by R. A. Kennedy	251

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read as papers to the Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria  
in December 1957.



# THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PORTUGUESE FACTORIES ON THE COSTA DA MINA TO THE MID EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

A. F. C. RYDER

AS PORTUGUESE enterprise first opened the sea routes from Europe to West Africa, that nation enjoyed a great advantage over all others in the trade which developed along these coasts. To the advantage of the pioneer in discovery the Portuguese added a superiority in the arts of navigation and an imperious energy generated in a national struggle to expel the Moors and establish a strong state. Finally the Papacy crowned their achievement by conferring on the King of Portugal the exclusive enjoyment of trade and dominion in these discoveries. For a brief period the Portuguese successfully preserved these rights. Then, exhausted by their incredible creation of the modern world and under increasing pressure from other nations that benefitted from the spread of protestantism and necessary technical knowledge, they found their dominion brought ever more into legal question and practical disregard. From the early 1520s the French interloper-cum-privateer infringed the Portuguese West African monopoly and preyed on their shipping: by the middle of the century Dutch and English were ardently subscribing to the same protestant trade doctrine and practice, with the result that the monopoly survived only in theory. Union with Spain in 1580 completed the ruin of the Portuguese position in West Africa, for Philip II and his successors, with half the world to defend, could spare nothing to maintain it. First trade withered away, then in 1638 the centre of power and commerce, Sao Jorge da Mina, fell to the Dutch after years of pathetic neglect. Portugal regained its independence in 1640, but too late to save the other post at Axem (it surrendered to the Dutch in 1642), for although peace was made with the most troublesome enemies, Portuguese trade and influence in West Africa had suffered total eclipse.

Faced with the task of rebuilding their West African trade almost from its foundations, the Portuguese might have judged the necessary labour and expense over-great, had not the intensive development of colonial settlement in Brazil in the second half of the seventeenth century demanded a constantly increasing supply of human labour such as the native population of South America could not provide.



The transatlantic traffic in African slaves, already two centuries old, indicated clearly enough where the labour might be found. More precisely, for Brazil, the obvious area from which to take slaves was that known to the Portuguese as the Costa da Mina. There the slave traffic was already firmly established among the coastal tribes (although the Portuguese had originally been importers, not exporters, of slaves) and the sea crossing to Brazil was the shortest possible, representing the smallest expenditure of lives and provisions, and, thus, the cheapest source of labour. But the Portuguese had been ousted from the Costa da Mina by the Dutch who refused to tolerate their return in anything but a tributary role: Brazilian ships attempting to trade there found themselves subjected to dues far outside the effective range of the Dutch forts, and these exactions were regularly supplemented by barely-disguised piracy. Losses of ships and cargoes were heavy and representations to the Brazilian government correspondingly frequent and strong, the most telling argument being that the consequent scarcity of slaves for the plantations and mines of Brazil was robbing the government of revenue and ruining the colony. Successive Governors of Brazil passed the complaints to the government of Portugal without being able to suggest any effective remedy, and for long the latter was unwilling to do anything more effective than protest to the States General. There were many reasons for official reluctance to grasp this problem. Economically the government looked with mercantilist alarm upon the large quantities of gold,<sup>1</sup> tobacco and sugar which private traders carried from Brazil to the Costa da Mina in order to purchase slaves. A considerable quantity of these commodities found their way directly into the hands of European privateers, and officials of the Treasury were persuaded that the remainder, although spent on the purchase of slaves, represented a direct diminution of the wealth of Portugal and so much gain to her bitterest economic rivals. The official ideal and alternative pattern of trade was an exchange of the products of Brazil for the slaves of the Portuguese colony of Angola. In practice the supply of slaves from Angola sufficed only for the Rio de Janeiro market, from which only a limited number of slaves were sold at a very high price to the northern South American colonies. Regulations fixing quotas of slaves, forbidding the export of gold, to the Costa da Mina and limiting the export of tobacco to that of lowest quality known as 'soca', attempted to force commerce into the desired channels without any satisfactory result. The Portuguese government feared too that attempts to protect and develop the trade of the Costa da Mina would involve them in renewed conflicts with those nations already established in the trade, and, hence, in heavy

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1. The Portuguese importation of gold *into* West Africa was another notable reversal of trade.



expenditure on factories, forts and vessels to patrol the coast. In 1698, for example, the King of Whydah invited a company of Brazilian merchants to establish a factory on the coast, and the company offered to do this if the Portuguese government would grant it a twelve year monopoly of the trade with certain other concessions. Their offer was rejected, firstly because the site suggested was within the territory of Popo with whom the King of Whydah was then at war, and appeared, therefore, to be primarily bait for military assistance; secondly, because at the end of the company's twelve year contract the Portuguese government would either be forced to take over responsibility for the fort, which the local revenues of S. Thome would not stand, or else to demolish it, which would deal a serious blow to national prestige. Instead it was determined to offer the King of Whydah some missionaries, "...because these reap more fruit from their labours alone than when they are with other men, for the reason that the behaviour of laymen customarily contradicts the teaching of the clergy."<sup>1</sup>

At this point it is necessary to emphasise the radical difference between the pattern of Portuguese trade with West Africa in the sixteenth century and that of the later part of the seventeenth century. During the first period the Portuguese had been mainly concerned to carry the wealth of the Costa da Mina to Portugal in the form of gold—hence the name they gave to that region—and slaves: ships sailed directly between Europe and the coast. But as the staple of the new trade changed decisively from gold to slaves, so its direction was reorientated from Portugal to Brazil: the great majority of Portuguese ships trading on the Costa da Mina sailed directly to and from Brazilian ports, especially Bahia. The direct sea route between Portugal and West Africa was almost abandoned for even the Indian fleets regularly sailed by the Brazilian route. So fundamental a development naturally led to corresponding changes in administration and control of the trade which had formerly been directed from Lisbon by the Casa da Mina, a government office controlled directly by the Crown. Supervision of the new traffic passed to the Governor (later Viceroy) of Brazil and the colonial government established in Bahia de Todos Santos which in all matters of policy had to refer to the Conselho Ultramarino of the metropolitan government. But when a message from the Costa da Mina, passed through Bahia, would take at least six months to reach Lisbon, so that any action could hardly take effect less than eighteen months after the event for which it was designed, control exercised from Portugal over officials and traders on the coast became practically ineffective. Instead, whatever control was possible, passed to Brazil, with the result that Portuguese officials and policy on the coast were dominated by the interests of officials,

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1. A.H.U. Consultas da Bahia, cod. 252, fol. 232r-v, 2 Dec. 1699.

colonists, merchants and shippers in Brazil. To reinforce that influence the great majority of the officers later appointed to posts in West Africa were drawn from the same Brazilian milieu.

For the first twenty years of the eighteenth century the argument continued between Brazil and Portugal over the degree to which Portuguese interests should be involved in the Costa da Mina trade. Events during these years strengthened both parties, for while the rapid growth of mining in Brazil called for ever-increasing numbers of sturdy labourers from West Africa (slaves from Angola were considered inferior for the work), the Dutch West India Company made still greater efforts to impose stringent conditions on Portuguese trade on that coast. The Dutch Governor at Elmina declared all goods of European origin in Portuguese ships to be contraband, and insisted that ships wishing to trade anywhere on the coast must first be cleared at Elmina where they paid a tax of 10% on their tobacco cargoes. Because of this Dutch pressure, tobacco and gold from Brazil became the staple commodities of Portuguese trade to the growing alarm of the tobacco monopolists and mercantilist economists of Portugal.

In 1721 the Brazilian interests took advantage of the arrival of a new Viceroy, Vasco Fernandez Cezar de Menezes, to force the issue. Their spokesman and instrument was a Captain Joseph de Torres who had great interests and experience in the Costa da Mina trade and who had demonstrated his disapproval of the existing regulations by repeatedly contravening them. Early in 1721 he returned to Bahia with a new offer of a factory site made to him by the King of Whydah. But the immediate concern of the Brazilian government was with Torres' illegal dealings with the Dutch at Elmina, for which he was imprisoned pending trial. His own legal expertise and the support of Bahia merchants soon released him and he was then able to advocate the Whydah project with powerful backing, for the slave trade directly interested all influential groups in Brazilian society. The Viceroy was persuaded that the establishment of a factory was vital to the Brazilian economy and that any delay in taking advantage of the offer from the King of Whydah would give the commercial rivals of Portugal time to bring pressure to bear on that King. As a further inducement to immediate action, Torres offered to undertake the work and transport the necessary building materials in his own ship at his own expense. So, convinced that the matter was too urgent to wait on a consultation with Lisbon and reassured over the question of funds, the Viceroy authorised Torres to establish the factory. It was built five miles inland, according to the custom of Whydah, and was given the name Sao Joao Baptista de Ajuda at a foundation ceremony attended by the King of Whydah who thus publicly gave his support to the Portuguese despite Dutch opposition. By the end of November 1721 the essential buildings had been completed at a cost, according to Torres' accounts, of 13,000 cruzados in materials and money supplied from Brazil, and



5,143,200 reis from his own resources.<sup>1</sup> Whether the 13,000 cruzados were supplied by the Brazilian treasury or by a group of merchants is uncertain. Most probably the merchant community of Bahia was the source of the money for it demonstrated its practical support for the undertaking by offering the Viceroy a tax of 10 tostones<sup>2</sup> on each slave carried to Brazil from the Costa da Mina. This offer was made and accepted in 1721 on the understanding that the proceeds of the tax would be devoted to establishing and maintaining the new factory; and from it Torres later claimed reimbursement of his expenses, or rather, asked that the equivalent sum be paid to the Treasury in settlement of the fine imposed on him for his earlier trading offences.

Opinion in the Conselho Ultramarino was sharply divided when first news of the unauthorised adventure reached Lisbon. The majority declared that "a man who has behaved so unworthily in royal service should not have been sent on a mission of such importance": furthermore, "we do not expect this factory or fortress at Ajuda<sup>3</sup> to produce any great effect, rather it will involve very harmful consequences because we have established ourselves in a region where there are also established foreign nations with whom we may have great quarrels and differences".<sup>4</sup> One Counsellor, however, argued that the employment of so "enterprising and intelligent" a man was exactly suited to the circumstances from which he anticipated great advantages. Once despatches arrived from the Viceroy and Torres announcing the success of the venture all members of the Conselho became seemingly enthusiastic. They agreed that Torres "not only deserves a pardon from Your Majesty for the crime of which he is accused, but also a reward and full payment of all he has spent in Your Majesty's service", for they now considered the establishment of the factory "a notable service".<sup>5</sup> They were even ready to investigate Torres' proposal that other factories be founded in Jaquem and Ardra, where the kings were offering the necessary facilities.

Torres remained at Whydah until the middle of 1722 completing the building and fortifications, for which he dismounted six cannon from his ship, and ensuring that the King of Whydah continued to resist foreign pressure against the Portuguese incursion. That done he put Francisco Pereira Mendes in charge of the factory and returned to Bahia to report to the Viceroy<sup>6</sup>. As a result of their consultations, the Viceroy recommended that a Director and Deputy-

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1. The cruzado was a coin worth 400 reis, whereas the real (plural reis) was a money of account.
  2. The tostao is a coin worth 100 reis.
  3. Ajuda was the name given to Whydah by the Portuguese.
  4. A.H.U. Bahia. caixa 27. Consulta. 23 Sept. 1721.
  5. A.H.U. Consultas da Bahia. cod.253. fol.284r-285r. 12 May 1723.
  6. Torres then went to Lisbon where he spent some time in prison before the change in official opinion overtook the steadier process of law.



Director be appointed in Whydah with adequate salaries to maintain their authority and make it unnecessary for them to engage in trade. The remaining establishment, he advised, should consist of a captain, sergeant and fifty men recruited locally for the garrison, and a store-keeper, clerk, surgeon, bloodletter and chaplain; their salaries would be met from the tax of 10 tostoos. All this the Portuguese government approved, placing the appointments in the hands of the Viceroy, "since it will be easier to find subjects suited to these posts in Brazil".<sup>1</sup> In addition the Conselho Ultramarino approved Torres' suggestion that two frigates should be detailed to patrol the Costa da Mina, turn and turn about, for the protection of Portuguese shipping and the prevention of gold and sugar smuggling from Pernambuco. The special tax on slaves would likewise meet the cost of these ships.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with these instructions the Viceroy appointed the temporary Director, Francisco Pereira Mendes, as first Director of the Whydah factory. The post of chaplain was filled in 1724 by an Italian Capuchin, seconded at the Viceroy's request by the Prefect of that order in Bahia. From the same order the Viceroy hoped to recruit sufficient men to found a mission in Whydah one of whose principal tasks would be to give a summary religious instruction to the slaves before they embarked for Brazil: he also wished to establish there a Prefect of the Capuchins to administer the Benin mission which covered all the coasts eastward to the Congo. At the request of the Viceroy the King of Portugal wrote to the General of the Capuchins in this sense, but it does not appear that a mission was ever established in Whydah.

For a few years the affairs of the factory ran smoothly and the slave trade flourished, while its centre, the Kingdom of Whydah, came under increasing pressure from its neighbours. Undoubtedly the boost which the establishment of the Portuguese factory had given to the wealth and importance of Whydah stimulated the cupidity of its rivals and hastened its downfall. In 1725 war broke out between Whydah and Ardra which had tried unsuccessfully to attract a Portuguese factory. At the same time the fatal attention of Guadja Trudu, the King of Dahomey, turned to the flourishing market from which his inland state was excluded. He demanded free access to the Whydah market, was refused, and so early in 1728 delivered an

1. A.H.U. Consultas da Bahia. cod. 253. fol.285r-286v. 12 May 1723. Although this was intended to be a temporary provision and not a permanent delegation of these appointments into the hands of the Viceroy, nominations were invariably made by the Viceroy and Brazilian domination of the trade thereby confirmed.
2. On 12 September 1724 a royal order increased the tax to 12 tostoos (1200 milreis) on every slave carried to the Americas from the Costa da Mina, Gambia, Calabar, Benin, Sao Thome and Principe. It came into force on 1st January 1725. Apparently the patrol ships never materialised: nor did the factory ever receive its full complement of officials.

attack which drove the King of Whydah and his family to take refuge in the island of Popo. A further attack destroyed the town and the Dutch and English factories forcing all the European inhabitants and between four and five thousand negroes to flee inside the walls of the French factory. For a short time the defenders of the factory resisted a siege by the forces of Dahomey making a number of sorties under cover of the French artillery; then the Europeans decided that the position was hopeless and withdrew to Jaquem. The Africans continued to hold out until the powder store caught fire. Within half an hour the fort and more than 3,000 of its occupants were blown to pieces, the survivors falling prisoners to the Dahomians.

Most significantly the Portuguese factory escaped the general destruction and the King of Dahomey took care to assure the Director of his keen interest in trade which he promised to encourage and protect. On the other side, the Viceroy of Brazil instructed Captain Joao Bazilio, who had become Director of the factory on the death of Francisco Pereira Mendes early in 1728, to present to the King of Dahomey his compliments and a fine sun hat. These Guadja Trudu received with evident pleasure and good relations seemed assured. But the chaos caused in Whydah by the Dahomey invasion and the hostility of all the surrounding rulers, "who have allied to destroy Dahomey whom they do not recognise except as a chief, since he has raised himself up from being a vassal of the King of Ardra",<sup>1</sup> combined to hamstring the slave trade of the Costa da Mina for a whole year. The new Director wrote to the Viceroy in June 1728 that despite the wars a number of slaves was reaching the coast, yet in the following October the Viceroy had to inform the Conselho Ultramarino that for three months not a single ship from the Costa da Mina had arrived in Bahia or Pernambuco. Usually the round voyage took six or seven months and the Viceroy now had to report that seventeen ships had sailed for the Costa da Mina during the past twelve months and none had yet returned or sent any account of its fate. As a capital of 1,200,000 cruzados was invested in these ships, their "disappearance" naturally caused a serious depression among the merchants of Brazil. The Viceroy judged it advisable to forbid any further voyage to the Costa da Mina until the fate of the missing ships should be known. This order caused some protests for the prospective profits of the trade were so great that there were still captains and merchants ready to take money from "persons not experienced enough to keep it on land"<sup>2</sup> and risk the voyage. In the event these optimists were soon justified for by the end of October 1728 three ships arrived from the Costa da Mina having sailed by way

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1. A.H.U. Consultas da Bahia: cod. 254. fol. 61v-62r. 13 Sept. 1729.

2. A.H.U. Bahia. caixa 39. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal. 12 October, 1728.

of the islands of Sao Thome and Principe: between them they carried a cargo of 1,732 slaves. Altogether in the eleven months from October 1728 to the end of August 1729, twenty one ships entered Bahia from the Costa da Mina carrying 8,923 slaves<sup>1</sup>. In the light of these figures it is difficult to understand how the Viceroy could write to the Conselho Ultramarino in May 1729 that "the trade of the Costa da Mina has so declined that in his opinion it is almost ruined"<sup>2</sup>.

In fact the resumption of the slave trade was partly due to the disposal of war captives by the King of Dahomey, and much more to the action of the Viceroy himself in ordering the establishment in Jaquem of a trading post with the status of a factory but under the charge of an unsalaried official already trading there on his own account and in good odour with the ruler. The King of Jaquem had asked for a factory ever since the Portuguese had settled in Whydah, so the Viceroy thought it advisable to take advantage of this offer early in 1729, lest the English and French traders, who had fled to Jaquem from Whydah, should anticipate the Portuguese in the port which had suddenly become the most important on the whole coast. Once again the Conselho Ultramarino could only acquiesce.

Guadja Trudu did not long allow the fruits of the slave trade to fall so abundantly to the King of Jaquem, although most of his attention was occupied by the attack that the Alafin of Oyo had launched against Dahomey in support of the exiled King of Whydah. By the middle of 1730 the flow of slaves to Jaquem had ceased as the Dahomeys cut all routes to the interior. At the same time Guadja Trudu asked Joao Bazilio, the Portuguese Director at Whydah, to intervene with the Alafin and persuade him to withdraw in return for the King's assurances of "good friendship". Hoping to put an end to these wars and so revive the trade of Whydah, Bazilio undertook this mission, but with no recorded result.

To those members of the Conselho Ultramarino who had originally opposed the establishment of a factory on the Costa da Mina, and to those interests in Portugal hostile to that trade, the disruption caused by the Dahomey wars afforded an excellent opportunity to reverse the decision taken by the Viceroy of Brazil in 1721. In a *consulta* of 26 August 1728 the Conselho, with no dissentient voices, urged that the only way of avoiding the inconvenience and losses inflicted on trade by African wars and Dutch interference was to prohibit all trade with the Costa da Mina. The slaves needed in Brazil, they argued, could be drawn from Angola and Guinea. Against this attack the Brazilian interests organised pressure in Lisbon which, although it could not prevent the promulgation of a law regulating the Costa da Mina

1. In the same period five ships from Angola entered Bahia with a total of 2,752 slaves.
2. A. H. U. Consultas da Bahia. cod. 254. fol. 61v.-62r. 13 Sept. 1729.



trade (1st July 1730), saved it from extinction. In effect the law attempted to remedy the situation by two provisions: first that all ships sailing from Brazil to the Costa da Mina should be armed as war-ships; secondly, that certain merchandise, principally gold, first and second quality tobacco and fine sugar, should not be employed in that trade. Such regulations were wholly impracticable and, therefore, ineffective. Most ships employed in the slave trade could not be armed to a degree which would have permitted them to fight Dutch frigates, and on others merchants were not prepared to spend the money or sacrifice cargo space on the usual plea that these measures would ruin them, the trade and Brazil. Also, since slaves could only be purchased with gold and tobacco, so long as the Dutch maintained their embargo on goods of European origin, it was useless to forbid trade in these articles, unless Dutch power were first broken. Apparently officials in Brazil never made any serious attempt to enforce the law, and the Governor of Elmina wrote to the Viceroy threatening reprisals for any attempt to evade Dutch trading regulations. There was never again any outright official opposition to the Costa da Mina trade.

Preoccupied by their quarrel with the Dutch, the Portuguese at first paid little attention to the problems presented by the rising power of Dahomey. Probably they expected the alliance of neighbouring states either to destroy Guadjá Trudu or else confine his power within petty limits. They were soon undeceived by the continuing career of Dahomey conquest. No sooner had the Oyos withdrawn (presumably late in 1730) than the Dahomey forces turned against the Maquis and conquered them at the beginning of 1732 after a siege lasting twelve months. On 30 March 1732 the King led his triumphant army back to his capital, Allada, and immediately turned his attention to Jaquem whose king had already become his tributary. Considerations of trade must have weighed heavily in his mind and especially the diversion of trade from Whydah to Jaquem and the establishment of French and Portuguese factories there after the Dahomey conquest of the former. He effectively disguised his intentions by despatching his warriors from Allada on 1st April 1732 to attack Paom, then a sizeable town and formerly a satellite of Whydah. The next day he sent his main force against Jaquem, achieved a complete surprise and carried the town by assault. The French factory was sacked, the Dutch looted and burned, for the King suspected the Dutch Director of having incited the Minnas and Oyos to attack him, and he had given particular orders to the Dahomey commander that this Director should be made prisoner. But the Dutchman managed to make a lucky last-minute escape to Apa with the King of Jaquem as his partner in flight. Amidst the confusion and destruction the Portuguese factory stood untouched as the King of Dahomey had ordered. According to Bazilio, the explanation was the high esteem in which Guadjá Trudu held the Portuguese—and he may have owed Bazilio

something for his intervention with the Alafin—yet that did not prevent him ordering the destruction of a fort which Joseph de Torres had begun building on the shore at Jaquem. All the cannon inside the fort were carried off to Allada. Later when Bazilio visited the Dahomey capital and enquired after these guns, he was told by the King that the fort had been demolished because it had been built without his permission. The excuse is not convincing because when the building began Jaquem stood only in a loose tributary relationship to Dahomey. The most plausible explanation of the action is that the King of Dahomey wanted the cannon, for, apart from this attack on Portuguese property, he demonstrated at this time an unmistakeable predilection for that nation.

Jaquem yielded an impressive booty. The calculations of the King of Dahomey showed 4,538 African prisoners, including the mother of the King of Jaquem whom he treated with great respect. In addition he had seized all Europeans found outside the Portuguese factory: 8 Portuguese,<sup>1</sup> 4 Frenchmen, 3 Englishmen and 6 Dutchmen—figures which help to confirm the predominance of the Portuguese in the trade of the coast. Besides prisoners, Bazilio estimated the spoils from the factories to be equivalent in value to 856 slaves: the value of 150 from the French factory, 600 from the Dutch factory, 80 from the captain of an English ship who had put his trade goods ashore, and 20 from various private individuals. On 4 April Antonio Pinto Carneiro, the Portuguese Director at Jaquem, visited Allada to express due gratitude for the preservation of his factory, and there he received another mark of favour when all the European prisoners, except the Dutch, were handed over to him. The Dutch were doomed to expiate the faults of their Director with a lengthy captivity, for at the beginning of September 1732 that same Director from his refuge at Apa was asking Antonio Pinto Carneiro to use his influence for their release and the restoration of his factory at Jaquem.<sup>2</sup> Joao Bazilio was able to assess the plunder from Jaquem with some exactitude because he, with the other Directors

1. This is the figure given by Antonio Pinto Carneiro, Director of the Portuguese factory at Jaquem. Bazilio puts the number at 7.
2. The Dutch Director must have turned to the Portuguese as a last resort. After the fall of Jaquem the usual hostility between the two nations had become locally much worse. On 6th April a Dutch ship, the "Amsterdam" belonging to the Enkhuizen Company, which was lying at Jaquem, seized two Portuguese vessels in the same port at the request of the Dutch Director. A few days later one of the ships was taken to Apa, where the Director then was, its crew was overpowered, the hatches forced open and 474 rolls of tobacco seized. The Director justified his action by the arguments that Antonio Pinto had incited the Dahomey attack on Jaquem (if true this would explain his favoured treatment) and that the Portuguese Directors owed him money. Of course, Bazilio and Antonio Pinto stoutly denied such assertions and insisted that the Dutchman had been driven to these extremes because he found himself penniless in Apa. Letters passed between the Viceroy of Brazil and the General of Elmina, but no settlement was ever reached.

from Whydah, had to pay the customary visit to Allada in April 1732 to compliment the King of Dahomey on his arrival there from the Maquis campaign. For the occasion, which after an astonishing week of military successes must have assumed the atmosphere of a triumph, Bazilio presented the King with some fine clothes, a few small kegs of spirits and some flasks of liqueurs. He found himself in favour for, although he did not manage to recover the cannon taken from Jaquem, the King delivered to him a letter for transmission to the King of Portugal offering that nation the seashore of Whydah and Jaquem if they would build forts in both places. This was a surprising proposal, considering the destruction of the fort at Jaquem a few days earlier and the insistence of earlier rulers that factories should be built a considerable distance inland. On the other hand the King had not made any objection in principle to the establishment of forts on the coast: he did insist that they should only be built with his permission. Why he should have invited the Portuguese to fortify the sea-shore is, however, a matter for conjecture. Possibly he calculated that Portuguese forts would not menace his own security and might provide a defence against the more formidable power of the Dutch. Certainly his motive was not a wish to appease the Portuguese, for while he offered favours with one hand he intruded heavily with the other into the affairs of their factory by giving orders that the captain of the garrison in the Whydah factory should be seized and taken to Allada for punishment. Bazilio was still at the Dahomey court when his officer was brought in and he had great difficulty in securing his release. It is true that the Director himself heartily disliked the captain whom he described as a man who found it "impossible to conceal his perverse nature or to live in peace with a single person"<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless the claim of the King of Dahomey to interfere with the European inhabitants of the factories, and, if necessary, to punish them, introduced a fertile source of unrest and friction. Usually such actions were not arbitrary according to Dahomey customary law, but while the Portuguese government conceded to the King of Dahomey full jurisdiction over his subjects within the factories, and over Portuguese subjects in civil matters where the other party was a Dahomian, it never conceded jurisdiction over Portuguese subjects in criminal cases. Also, while the ultimate sovereignty of the King of Dahomey over the factory premises was acknowledged in various ways, it was never clear how far this could be extended to interference with their internal affairs where the honour of the King of Portugal was involved.

Trade on the Costa da Mina suffered disruption for another year because of the Dahomey invasions, and not until the Jaquem prisoners were offered for sale in September 1732 did two Portuguese

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1. A.H.U. Sao Thome. caixa 4. 8 Sept. 1732.



ships manage to dispose of their tobacco advantageously. When they sailed for Bahia they carried large slave cargoes and letters from Bazilio, Pinto Carneyro and the King of Dahomey. In January 1733 a new Viceroy of Brazil, the Conde de Sabugoza, forwarded the letters to Portugal, adding his own comments on the decay of trade and the "outrages" inflicted on Portuguese subjects and shipping. Regarding the proposal that the Portuguese should build forts at Jaquem and Whydah, the Viceroy thought it attractive but impracticable so long as war kept the coastal states in turmoil. The solution he foresaw was that the King of Dahomey, the centre of the upheaval, would establish a single, strong, stable government disposed to give the Portuguese preferential treatment in matters of trade:

"...today this king is the most respected and feared on the coast, but he is extremely friendly to the Portuguese nation; so much so that he does not wish to have any other in his dominions, because the Portuguese are best suited to and most useful for the trade of the country: for this reason it is necessary that Your Majesty should answer him with demonstrations of royal favour, accepting his offer."<sup>1</sup>

With a monopoly of the Dahomey trade in prospect as soon as the King of Dahomey should have consolidated his conquests, the Viceroy of Brazil was not inclined to worry overmuch if his officers suffered some interim hardship and indignity. The hostility between the King of Dahomey and the Dutch was particularly pleasing to Portuguese interests. When the reports from the Costa da Mina eventually reached the Conselho Ultramarino in Lisbon, almost exactly one year after the occurrence of the events in question, that body approved the views of the Viceroy as most beneficial for the development of Brazil and least costly to the Treasury. Bazilio, for all his apparent favour with the King of Dahomey, was far less optimistic: he wrote to the Viceroy after the sack of Jaquem, "these lands will know no peace while Dahomey rules, and trade must grow less, for the sole care of this tyrant is to destroy everything by war".<sup>2</sup>

The sanction of force had, indeed, passed into the hands of the native power, for the small garrisons of ill-trained local soldiery within the half-fortified factories could not pretend to resist, let alone coerce, the formidable hordes of Dahomey. It was natural, therefore, that the King of Dahomey should use his comparative advantage of strength to exact greater profit from European trade and exercise greater control over the factories to ensure that they did nothing against his economic and political interests. The factory officials resisted his demands and encroachments as their means and

1. A.H.U. S. Thome. caixa 4. 12 Jan. 1733. Bahia. Viceroy of Brazil to King of Portugal.

2. A.H.U. Sao Thome. caixa 4. 8 Sept. 1732.

characters allowed. But trade did not decline as Bazilio had anticipated because the King of Dahomey and the Portuguese both derived such profit from the slave traffic that both stopped short of actions which could ruin it: the factory officials stood ready to hand as whipping-boys for both sides. Statistics for the slave trade have been a notorious subject for polemic, but it is almost certain that the indiscriminate war-making of Dahomey, combined with the expanding demands of Brazil and the Antilles, led to a great increase in the transatlantic slave trade at this time. In the 1730s an average of 6,000 slaves were carried every year from the Costa da Mina to Bahia. In return a flood of tobacco and spirits and a considerable quantity of gold flowed into Dahomey. For his personal revenue the King of Dahomey took from every vessel the value of ten slaves in gold dust or in merchandise which he himself selected; and from the factories he received customary gifts on the arrival of a new director and at his own chief festivals. Patent economic self-interest thus stood guard over the future of Portuguese trade with the Costa da Mina.

For a decade after the Dahomian conquest, the Portuguese factory at Whydah lived in a comparative tranquillity attested by a scarcity of documents. The King of Dahomey favoured Whydah, rather than Jaquem, as a trading port so that it soon regained its former importance. Trade there was supervised for the King of Dahomey by a resident official known as the Yevo-gan, or Aboga to the Portuguese, with a permanent garrison of soldiers to uphold his authority. In June 1736 these men seized Manoel Correa da Cunha, that captain of the garrison in the Portuguese factory who had been haled off to Allada four years earlier. Evidently his "perverse nature" had not improved. Otherwise no serious disputes arose between Portuguese and Dahomian officials.

In contrast to Whydah, Jaquem suffered a decade of disasters. The first Director, Antonio Pinto Carneiro, resigned; so in March 1735 the Viceroy of Brazil appointed in his place Jose Roiz da Silva who was to have a baleful influence both there and in Whydah. Like his predecessor, da Silva received no salary but carried on a lucrative trade on his own account, which, according to himself, permitted him to buy 64 slaves and a quantity of arms for the use of his factory. With potentates he apparently knew how to conduct himself, for he was able to persuade the Dahomian King to release the captain of the Whydah garrison, and in 1738 he performed the same service for two sea captains and two sailors imprisoned by the King of Chamba. With more immediate neighbours his relations were not at all so amiable. He had been at his post only a year when he lost 97 slaves, a large quantity of merchandise and almost his life in an attack on the factory by local inhabitants. There is no suggestion that the King of Dahomey had any hand in this affair or that any of the other factories were assaulted. Despite this setback da Silva contrived to rebuild his fortunes, until the same attackers returned

in 1738 "burning, robbing, and slaying everything"<sup>1</sup>. This time the same fate befell all the European factories in Jaquem, although the King of Dahomey was still not involved in the quarrel. Da Silva gave up the struggle at Jaquem<sup>2</sup> and took himself to Whydah, where he immediately began an intrigue to supplant Bazilio. To that end he joined forces with another Portuguese trader named Francisco Nunes Pereira and together they soon persuaded the King of Dahomey that Joao Bazilio was supplying the King of Chamba with arms and powder to make war on Dahomey. It is very probable that they were in fact accusing Bazilio of their own actions, for we have seen that da Silva was on good terms with the King of Chamba in 1738, and the Portuguese captains who sailed to that coast were convinced that he and Francisco Nunes were largely responsible for the fighting between Dahomey and Chamba. Acting on their suggestion the King of Dahomey summoned Bazilio to Allada and there held him prisoner for six or seven months attempting to extract a confession of his alleged arms deals with frequent threats of execution.<sup>3</sup> As soon as the news reached Bahia, the Viceroy ordered an inquiry which satisfied him of the guilt of da Silva and Nunes; he therefore ordered the captains of two ships sailing to Whydah to do all in their power to arrest these two and carry them to Bahia. A year later the King of Portugal approved the measures taken by the Viceroy, but, in conjunction with the Conselho Ultramarino, showed himself anxious to conciliate the King of Dahomey. The Viceroy was ordered to appoint a new Director, "a person of known capacity, experience and knowledge of the affairs and trade of the Costa da Mina . . . who should be very particularly instructed to maintain all the understanding, agreement and friendship which the Portuguese have always had with the King of Dahomey".<sup>4</sup> While the new Director might do all in his power to put da Silva and Nunes out of favour in Dahomey, and even ask that they be handed over to him, in all this he was to act with "all prudence and caution". Moreover the Viceroy was told to write to the King of Dahomey telling him that Bazilio had been recalled because he was "displeasing and suspect" to the King. Not the slightest hint appears of any protest against the action of the King of Dahomey in seizing, imprisoning and threatening with death a senior royal official.

No new appointment was necessary because many months before the royal letter ordering it reached Brazil, Bazilio had been set free

1. A.H.U. Sao Thome caixa 6. consulta 11 Dec. 1745.
2. The Portuguese never reestablished their Jaquem factory.
3. This probably happened in August 1739, for the Viceroy reported the matter to the Conselho Ultramarino in a letter written on 20 September 1739. A.H. U. Consultas da Bahia, cod .254. fol. 173r-174v.
4. *ibid.*



and reinstated in his factory "with great demonstrations of esteem" from the King of Dahomey and all the Directors of the other European factories in Whydah. Shortly afterwards, that is in the second half of 1740, the King of Dahomey died. The new king received the Viceroy's letter asking for the surrender of da Silva and Nunes with "marks of respect", but it was only with reluctance that he agreed to hand over da Silva: Francisco Nunes managed to escape to Pernambuco. In prison in Bahia da Silva became dangerously ill so the Viceroy released him against adequate sureties. Nunes too, after being arrested in Pernambuco where he had meanwhile stirred up trouble between the Governor and the Carmelites, spent only a short time in prison thanks to the intervention of wealthy friends. As for Bazilio, the Viceroy decided to keep him in Whydah considering his good relations with the new King of Dahomey and the other directors, his long experience on the Costa da Mina, and the lack of any suitable successor. In the past Bazilio himself had frequently asked for the appointment of a successor, but with the accession of the new king he apparently expected an improvement in conditions on the coast, for he now showed himself ready to continue as Director in Whydah.

If life did become easier for Bazilio, it was only for a short time. Within two years the new king grew convinced that the Director was obstructing trade with Portuguese and other ships, having received complaints on this score from representatives of other nations. The truth behind these allegations is probably that Bazilio was attempting to regulate the "free for all" trading which till then had allowed any number of ships to sail from Brazil to the Costa da Mina, with a resulting increase in the export of prohibited merchandise, losses to pirates, and in the time needed to complete a slave cargo. Also as a result of unrestricted competition, the value of Brazilian trade goods had fallen heavily. Eventually, a law of 8 May 1743 was to restrict the number of ships permitted to sail to the Costa da Mina to twenty-four which were to sail in groups in strict rotation at intervals of three months and over a total period of two years. Opposition to this regulation from the merchants and ship owners of Brazil was naturally fierce and determined, and it is reasonable to assume that Bazilio's opinion was sought before the law was framed. It was an easy matter for enemies of Bazilio and regulated trade to demonstrate to the Dahomian king that restrictions on trade damaged his interests. The King also suspected that Bazilio was buying powder and ammunition for his enemies the kings of Chamba and of Apa and Popo who were still sheltering the dispossessed rulers of Jaquem and Whydah. A complete lack of evidence makes it impossible to form any judgment on this latter allegation, but it may be remembered that the previous king had found it impossible to substantiate a similar accusation against Bazilio.

About 8 o'clock on the morning of 24 June 1743 a Dahomey army appeared before the Portuguese factory at Whydah, advanced to within a cannon-shot of the walls, and set up its encampment there. The commander then sent messengers to assure the occupants of the Portuguese and other European factories that he had no wish to molest them or their establishments. The purpose of this action was revealed the following day when Joao Bazilio left his factory to attend the annual "customs" at Allada and present his "dashes" to the king. As he passed the Dahomey forces he was seized, held prisoner for three or four days and then taken to the capital. On the same day a Dahomey chief "Agahon" took prisoner outside the factory Manoel Goncalves, the Director's deputy, who was likewise sent to Allada. With the chief officers of the factory thus disposed of, the Dahomey commander next demanded the surrender of some "Couronas" sheltering there, on the grounds that they were enemies. Meeting with a refusal, he reported to the king and received instructions to take them from the factory by force. Whether voluntarily or not Bazilio also sent word to his subordinates that they should surrender the "Couronas". But either those inside the factory were unwilling to hand them over to a certain death, or the "couronas" themselves refused to submit to that fate, for when the Dahomey troops on 22 July opened fire on the factory with cannon, the Portuguese guns answered. Fighting did not last long because a burning cartridge or powder barrel having set the thatch roof of the factory ablaze, a desperate African set fire to the powder room so that all the storehouses might be burned and no plunder fall into the hands of the enemy. Fire and explosions completely destroyed the factory, as well as a considerable number of its negro defenders. Those taken prisoner by the Dahomians were later sold to French and Portuguese slave ships.

After holding Bazilio prisoner for some four months, the King of Dahomey sent him and his deputy under escort to the coast where they were put on board a Portuguese ship bound for Bahia. Meanwhile he had summoned the chaplain of the Portuguese factory, Martinho da Cunha Barbosa, to Allada and told him to act as Director until the Viceroy of Brazil should make a new appointment. Through the French Director he requested the captain of a Portuguese vessel to supply a flag to fly over the ruins, and even began the reconstruction of the factory by furnishing a number of carpenters and builders and ordering chiefs to supply porters to transport the materials. By the time Bazilio was deported the main gates had been rebuilt. No doubt these conciliatory measures were partly an endeavour to fix the blame for the whole episode upon Joao Bazilio, and partly an effort to restore the profitable trade of the factory.

As soon as Bazilio and Goncalves landed in Bahia, the Chief Judge and Provedor Mor of the Brazilian Treasury ordered their detention pending a full inquiry. The Treasury Attorney, on the basis of a statement of evidence from witnesses, recommended that

the case be referred to the Viceroy and all Bazilio's goods placed under sequestration. Next the Viceroy instructed the Chief Criminal Judge of Bahia to conduct an inquiry into Bazilio's conduct. At the same time the Provedor Mor only having been appointed in September 1743, and knowing nothing of West African affairs, felt unable to reach any conclusion in the case, and so in March 1744 referred it to the Conselho Ultramarino. The supposition that Bazilio had offended powerful interests in Brazil is strengthened at this point by his inability to find sureties for his release from prison, although some notable blackguards had met with no difficulty in a similar plight. To avoid an indefinite prolongation of his imprisonment, threatened by the reference of his case to Portugal, he petitioned the King that the trial should be held before the Chief Criminal Judge of Bahia, on the grounds that all the witnesses were to be found in Bahia or in other parts of Brazil. In October 1744 the Conselho Ultramarino decided that on the preliminary evidence no blame attached to Bazilio, but reserved judgment until the Viceroy should have submitted a full report on the judicial inquiry. Bazilio's petition was granted, both because he could more easily prepare his defence in Bahia, and because his punishment there, if found guilty, would "serve as an example to the Directors who follow him".<sup>1</sup> Once again the Conselho does not appear to have felt especial concern at the arrest, detention and, this time, deportation, of royal officials. A graver view was taken of the arbitrary appointment of the chaplain as temporary director; but the Conselho advised that he be left in charge of the factory and the action of the King of Dahomey be neither approved nor condemned. Most serious of all in official eyes was the destruction of the factory for which the King of Dahomey was clearly responsible. However, as the Treasury Attorney pointed out, it was impossible to exact any satisfaction by force, therefore since the King seemed ready to rebuild the factory, he should be managed carefully in the hope that he would complete this voluntary reparation.

In November 1744 the Conselho Ultramarino received the report of the inquiry held by the Chief Criminal Judge of Bahia. This gave such a very different impression of events from that of the preliminary statement of evidence that one may well suspect the influence on the inquiry of those bent on Bazilio's ruin. For the Treasury Attorney the new evidence furnished "adequate proof that the friendship, trade and commerce which existed between the negro enemies of the King of Dahomey and the Director and other officials of the factory, were the principal cause of its destruction"<sup>2</sup>. The Conselho was of the same opinion and ordered Bazilio to be brought to trial in Bahia.

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1. A.H.U.S. Thome. caixa 5. Consulta. 29 Oct. 1744.

2. A.H.U.S. Thome. caixa 5. Consulta. 15 Dec. 1744.



Whatever the result of the trial he was not to be reinstated as Director of Whydah or allowed to return in any private capacity to the Costa da Mina, lest his enmity with the King of Dahomey provoke new disorders. A further consequence of laying all the blame squarely upon Bazilio and his officials was to lift that small part which had previously fallen upon the King of Dahomey. "As regards the reestablishment of the fortress, we believe that, as the King of Dahomey has ordered it to be rebuilt, no action is at present called for, and that it would not be proper to seek any further satisfaction from this King, especially considering his repeated assurances and the proofs that he has so far given of his desire to retain the friendship of the Portuguese nation; and also considering that this outrage was not perpetrated against that nation but for revenge against certain persons living in that fortress..."<sup>1</sup> The King of Dahomey won a further victory when the Viceroy reported to the Conselho Ultramarino his inability to find a new Director for Whydah: he was forced to leave the chaplain in charge. The Conselho could do no more than urge the Viceroy to garrison Whydah as quickly and unobtrusively as possible with its full complement of officials, soldiers and arms, and ensure that they were promptly paid and properly equipped. To discover what funds from the slave tax were available for the effective reestablishment of the factory, the Conselho ordered the Provedor Mor of Brazil to make a thorough investigation of the administration of that tax and the expenditure of the income from it.

Joao Bazilio, reduced to extreme wretchedness by the sequestration of his goods and property, and in ill-health since his arrival in Bahia died in the prison of Bahia before he could be brought to trial. Unable to touch his goods, those creditors who supplied his barest necessities while he lay in prison at last ordered his two sons to be sold in the public slave market. One must assume that they were half-castes, although no document mentions that fact. This last blow of spite by the merchant class of Bahia was at least averted at last moment by the intervention of the new Viceroy, the Conde das Galveas, who allowed some arrears of salary to be paid to the stricken man. On that sum Bazilio managed to die, leaving his sons to exist on charity and the help of his few friends, for his estate was not freed from sequestration. The fate of Joao Bazilio proved a more effective warning to his successors than the Conselho Ultramarino could have imagined, because for a long time the Viceroy looked in vain for someone willing to accept that post.

Those who had fought Bazilio and, more fundamentally, strict state control of the slave trade, took various advantage of the Director's defeat. Jose Roiz da Silva promptly sent a petition to the King of Portugal asking for the post of Director at Whydah and claiming that he possessed,;—

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1. *ibid.* The words are those of the Treasury Attorney.

“all the necessary qualifications for this post having held a similar one in the factory at Jaquem, where he displayed his great zeal and the good understanding and favour which he has with those barbarians, for he knows how one must deal with them, which is one of the most essential things in keeping them friends with us and so furthering the interests of our nation and the King’s service. The petitioner also has a thorough knowledge of those countries, and is already accustomed to the extremely bad climate. It would not be easy to find any other person with all these qualifications. . .”<sup>1</sup>

Da Silva did not get the position. Francisco Nunes Pereira took advantage of the changed climate to slip back to Dahomey. A majority of the merchants clamoured for abolition or, at least, relaxation of the restrictions on trade with the Costa da Mina.<sup>2</sup>

In Whydah also the attitude of the Portuguese government had serious repercussions. As the King of Dahomey realised how little reaction against himself had resulted from his drastic assault on the occupants and property of the Portuguese factory, he abandoned his efforts to rebuild it and restricted himself to supplying the chaplain-director with a few labourers. Yet the half-ruined state of the establishment and the amateur status of its director did not apparently impair its efficiency. Padre Martinho da Cunha Barbosa managed to complete the cargoes of the slave ships more quickly than in the past: but it must be remembered that the new regulation on the number of ships would have helped him considerably. Among Portuguese captains and the other European directors at Whydah, and especially with M. Jaques Levet the French director, the chaplain won golden opinions. Moreover he avoided giving offence to the Dahomian King.

This brief period of calm ended abruptly with the chaplain’s death on 18 March 1746. The Viceroy of Brazil had sent no new officials to Whydah since the expulsion of Bazilio and the Deputy-Director; consequently, there was no one to replace the chaplain. Two days later, however, Francisco Nunes Pereira by no coincidence reappeared in Whydah and distributed large “dashes” to the Yevo-gan and other Dahomey chiefs in the town. With their assistance he entered the Portuguese factory in the middle of the night of 21 March, announced that the King had appointed him to take charge, then fired off a few cannon and hoisted a Portuguese flag to signify that he had formerly taken possession. It is probable, although unproven, that Nunes was acting as he claimed with the sanction of the King of Dahomey who may have counted on putting another of his own nominees into the factory without delay. If that was his intention, he soon found that he had backed the wrong man in Francisco Nunes

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1. A.H.U.S. Thome . caixa 6. consulta. 11 Dec. 1745.

2. They were opposed by a small powerful group of some eight men who had managed to get control of all 24 ships permitted in the trade.

whose reputation among the European community in Whydah was such that it united them all against him. Still more objectionable than Nunes' character, in the eyes of all European factory officials, was the King of Dahomey's implicit assertion of a right to nominate a temporary director in a factory whenever death or his own action removed the properly-appointed officer, both contingencies which might arise so frequently as to give the king virtual control of the factories. They asserted that, in such circumstances, the appointment should be made by the senior representatives of the nation concerned who happened to be in the area: they were thinking, in particular, of ships captains. Two Portuguese captains and M. Levet hurried to Allada the next day to protest in the name of all European nations on the coast and to obtain the King's consent for the expulsion of Francisco Nunes and the election of another temporary director by Portuguese nationals. Either the King was taken aback by the force of this unprecedented opposition or he was sincerely unaware of the intrigue, for he denied giving Nunes any authority to act in his name and declared that he did not want him anywhere in his territories, much less in the Portuguese factory. Nor did he raise any objection to the proposed method of electing a new director: he directed that the French and English directors, together with the Portuguese captains, should elect a suitable person to govern the factory until the Viceroy of Brazil or the King of Portugal made a permanent appointment. Although the King of Dahomey in this way met all the immediate demands of the European officials, it should be noted that the election took place, in theory at least, at his "direction" and, therefore, under his authority. Probably the Europeans wittingly paid this price in the hope of establishing the procedure.

Deprived of Dahomey support, Francisco Nunes was quickly expelled from the factory, but not, to the regret of the Viceroy, seized and sent in chains to Brazil. In the election of a new director the Portuguese captains (for the other directors prudently left the choice to them) turned again to the clergy, choosing an Augustinian, Padre Francisco do Espirito Santo, who had gone to Sao Thome as a missionary in the company of the late bishop of that island. Apparently he was visiting the coast on board one of the Portuguese ships then trading at Whydah. On 6 April 1746 his electors, the Yevo-gan the chiefs of Whydah and the Dahomey war-chiefs ceremoniously installed the new director in the factory, and a proces verbal of the whole proceeding was drawn up and signed by the English and French directors and the Portuguese captains. In all this activity M. Levet continued to play a prominent part: he also supplied Padre do Espirito Santo with some stores of which the factory stood in urgent need—no doubt Francisco Nunes had not entirely wasted his time inside the factory.

Within a month the King of Dahomey repented of his retreat under pressure and reasserted his claim to nominate a temporary



director: and this time he gave his support openly to Francisco Nunes. According to the French and English directors this persistent character achieved the reversal of policy by giving many valuable presents to the King and his principal advisers, while the Augustinian director, in less munificent terms, declared that Nunes gave "the shirt off his back".<sup>1</sup> On 4 May 1746 the King ordered the arrest of P. Francisco do Espirito Santo who was held prisoner in the house of the Yevo-gan for nine days, then put on a Portuguese ship which carried him to the island of Principe. Francisco Nunes once more took charge of the factory, and once more the English and French directors and the Portuguese on the coast protested vigorously. Jaques Levet again undertook the three-day journey to Allada and argued fruitlessly with the King for three hours. This time the King would make no concessions, except to admit to Levet that Nunes was a notoriously bad character; otherwise he insisted that his nominee must remain in possession of the factory until the Viceroy or King of Portugal appointed a new director.

News of the death of P. Martinho da Cunha Barbosa, Nunes' first intrusion, the election of P. Francisco do Espirito Santo and his swift expulsion all reached Bahia within the space of a few days. The first reaction of the Viceroy was to search for a new director since it was clearly impossible to leave Nunes in possession. His task was not an easy one for, with Bazilio in mind, several of the most suitable men refused the post: at last, and with obvious misgivings, he chose a sea-captain named Felix Jose de Gouvea who had been engaged in the slave trade to the Costa da Mina for more than eighteen years. Some of these years he had spent on shore in Dahomey where he had had dealings with the kings and chiefs, thus acquiring considerable practical knowledge of the trade, the country and its customs. Among the Brazilian merchants he had a reputation as a reliable and experienced man of business and as a man of resource in a difficult situation. The Viceroy's description of him certainly gives the impression that his interests and opinions were close to those of the majority of Brazilian merchants. To that extent his appointment was for them a posthumous victory over Bazilio and a further step towards easing trade restriction.

Fundamentally of more importance for the restoration of the Whydah factory than the early removal of Nunes was the Viceroy's decision to send with the new director all the other officials needed to bring the establishment to its full strength. He also considered it essential that the factory which lay "in the last stages of ruin" should be completely rebuilt; but without authorisation from the Portuguese government he could only order repairs. The inquiry by the Provedor Mor into the fund originally destined for the building

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1. A.H.U. S. Thome. caixa 6. copy of letter from P. do Espirito Santo to Viceroy of Brazil, 6 July 1746.

and upkeep of the factory revealed that an adequate sum had accumulated for its reconstruction. The reserves of the fund amounted to 20,892 milreis and its annual income from the duty on slaves to 7,200 milreis, while the total salaries of the staff in Whydah cost only 2,960 milreis a year. With a proper expenditure on building and arms, the Viceroy argued, the King of Dahomey might be deterred from such frequent and facile interference with the factory; in due course the Conselho Ultramarino agreed with him. The instructions which the Viceroy gave to the new director also reveal a determination to avoid giving the King of Dahomey any future pretext or opportunity to interfere with the government of the factory. The director was forbidden to leave the factory for any length of time or to travel any distance from it, except for the customary visits to Allada which were to be as brief as possible: in all such necessary absences the deputy-director was to remain behind in command, so that the factory would always be under the control of a senior official. In the next paragraph of these instructions de Gouvea was told to pay very particular attention to his dealings with the King of Dahomey and his principal war chiefs and counsellors, "because there are no means of restraining and controlling them when their suspicions lead them to excesses; the only remedy is for you to take precautions to see that such situations do not arise, by being careful not to offend them, or take any part in their affairs, quarrels and wars".<sup>1</sup> Should some rash action of a Portuguese trader, or some other incident lead, despite the Director's precautions, to a "palaver", immediately he learned of it he was to do his utmost "to remedy matters by the most conciliatory and appropriate means, seeing that the penalty inflicted is as light as possible and that it falls upon the culprit. In all this he will act as though he were Portuguese consul in that country." Next the instructions turn to the "customs" or "dashes" given to the King of Dahomey by all Europeans on certain customary visits to his court: these he had "come to expect and accept as though due to him as a form of tribute". Also they were subject to inflation as directors attempted to outbid each other, adventurers like Francisco Nunes bought favours, and the King raised his demands. The new Portuguese director was ordered to contribute strictly in relation to the presents of the other directors, and to take great care that he was not responsible for introducing any increase. Finally, in an attempt to ensure that no other persons of Nunes' kind should disturb relations between the King of Dahomey and the factory, the Viceroy instructed de Gouvea to permit no Portuguese subject to settle outside the factory, and within it only the properly appointed officials and merchants whose business required it. "The remainder, that is, vagabonds, criminals and deserters from ships, shall be captured and sent to Brazil".

1. A.H.U. S. Thome. caixa 6. Regimento .24 Sept. 1746.

Measures were also taken to remove Francisco Nunes Pereira from the factory and West Africa. To that end de Gouvea carried sealed orders to be opened only when his ships anchored off Whydah. These detailed the elaborate precautions he was to take to ensure that no one from the ship should warn Nunes of his arrival before he himself could confront Nunes and place him securely aboard the ship in irons. With the assistance of M. Levet the arrest was made as the Viceroy had ordered and Nunes was carried back to Bahia to face another trial. But in Brazil his credit and influence were still not much damaged for the Viceroy declared to the Conselho that should he leave for Portugal, for his term of office was nearing its end, within four days Nunes would be set at liberty in Bahia. In response to the Viceroy's appeal for some action to avoid such a miscarriage of justice, the Conselho Ultramarino decided that the the new Viceroy and Chancellor should be instructed to have Nunes tried and sentenced within two months by the judges of greatest integrity available in Brazil. As a further precaution the Conselho directed that a death sentence or "the nearest penalty to that" should be carried out without reference to Portugal; "but if the sentence, as is not to be hoped, should be milder, it shall not be carried out until the Viceroy has reported to Your Majesty with a copy of the sentence". The outcome of the trial is unknown, but it would be safe to assume that Nunes escaped comparatively lightly.

Assurance that the Kings of Dahomey were particularly well-disposed towards the Portuguese had vanished. In its place the Viceroy Conde das Galveas had arrived at the conclusion that enlightened self-interest on the part of these kings might serve instead to favour the Portuguese: "as this cruel man continues to be cautious and wary in everything touching his own interests, that same ambition which drives and incites him to robbery and violence, also controls and restrains him from worse excesses; because he fears that he may lose the means and opportunity of committing them. Also experience has shown him that, apart from the trade which the Portuguese bring to his ports, no other nation frequents them, for, since the present disturbances have broken out in Europe, the French and English but rarely sail to that coast for trade; and even if they go there, they cannot supply tobacco, which is the merchandise most prized by those negroes."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the value of Portuguese trade to the King of Dahomey, the reorganisation and reconstruction of the factory, and another measure which the Viceroy proposed to reveal later, should, in his view, enable the slave trade to continue in a manner satisfactory to Brazilian interests. The most directly efficacious means of coercing the King of Daho-

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1. A.H.U. S. Thome. caixa 6. consulta. 16 June 1749.

2. A.H.U. S. Thome. caixa 6. Conde das Galveas to King of Portugal. Bahia 8, October 1747.



me, namely to boycott his ports for one year, could not be applied, the Viceroy argued, without doing immeasurable harm to the Brazilian economy by depriving it of the 6,000 slaves brought every year from Dahomey. Although slaves might be bought elsewhere, notably in Epe, Popo and Badagry, he was convinced that these places could never meet the Brazilian demand. Nevertheless it is difficult to understand why the Portuguese did not at this time endeavour to expand their trade with other ports as a means of lessening their dependence on Dahomey. The Conselho Ultramarino agreed entirely with the Viceroy's analysis of the situation and advanced no policy or measures of its own. It is, however, indicative of the conviction which the Brazilian "lobby" had carried in Lisbon that no member of the Conselho seized this opportunity to propose the abandonment of the Costa da Mina trade.

Perhaps the policy of the Conde das Galveas was only partially responsible, but the attitude of the King of Dahomey towards the Portuguese factory became markedly more amiable after the arrival of de Gouvea. The French and English factories in the same period declined rapidly, as the English fell to pieces around its two inhabitants who did hardly any trade, and M. Jaques Levet was in 1748 arrested by order of the King and put aboard a ship bound for Bahia. To set the seal on the apparent Portuguese ascendancy in the trade of the Costa da Mina, the King of Dahomey arranged with the Portuguese Director to send two of his chiefs as messengers to Bahia. They sailed to Brazil early in 1751 and presented the King's greetings to the new Viceroy, the Conde de Atouguia, as well as a present of Dahomey cloths and four negresses that were sent on to the King of Portugal. Their purpose, as expressed in an audience with the Viceroy, was to ask for the maintenance of Portuguese trade with their country. Taking full advantage of this unprecedented sign of concern, the Viceroy replied that their king had so often violated his obligations to the Portuguese nation that he could not trust his expressions of good will or consent to receive any messengers from him as his ministers: the hospitality which he had ordered for them was no more than that given to all foreign visitors. The only conditions on which he could agree to discuss with the King of Dahomey a development of trade were the restoration of the Whydah factory to its original condition before the Dahomey army attacked it, and the return of all the goods taken from it. The messengers returned to Dahomey regaled with some costumes made after the fashion of their nation, and in their company went a new director Luiz Coelho de Brito (de Gouvea had asked to be relieved of the post) charged especially with the task of obtaining this reparation from the King.

Despite the implication in the Dahomey message that the slave traffic with Brazil had fallen off, or was in danger of doing so, there is no evidence that this had happened. The Conde das Galveas had complained in 1747 that the small group who monopolised the trade

of the Costa da Mina deliberately neglected to despatch the fleets at the stipulated three monthly intervals with the object of inducing a shortage of slaves. But his successor discovered from the customs accounts that the number of slaves brought from the Costa da Mina had risen during the preceding years, so that the rise in price of slaves, of which the mines and plantations complained, could not be attributed to a slackening of the slave traffic. In the minds of employers of slave labour and of ship owners and masters excluded from the Costa da Mina the idea persisted, however, that many more slaves might be obtained and at a lower price if the restriction on the number of slave ships were abolished or relaxed. The Conde de Atouguia, like his predecessor resisted all pressure to return to a system of free trade with the Costa da Mina in the conviction that the merchants would ruin themselves, the tobacco trade, and the slave market by cut-throat competition in the African ports. The half-century of struggle over the slave trade ended therefore, with an order issued by the Viceroy on 14 February 1750 which maintained the number of ships and the interval and order of sailing as already established. Only one important amendment was introduced, which was to forbid any one person or company to own more than one of the ships; and to spread participation in the trade still wider, the order provided that a third of the cargo of all large ships, and a quarter in the smaller, should be assigned to any merchants or other citizens who wished for a share in the voyage. This method of regulating the trade, like the *modus vivendi* which had established itself on the coast, was a compromise between interests superficially in conflict: those of the Portuguese government, Dahomey, monopolists, "freetraders", sugar merchants, tobacco producers - indeed almost every group with an interest in the commerce of Portugal and the Portuguese American colonies. Deeper than the conflict, the heart of the compromise was a conviction that all benefitted from the slave trade with the Costa da Mina, and that upon it rested the prosperity of Portugal, the Americas and Dahomey. During the first half of the eighteenth century that conviction strengthened, sank deeper and gradually triumphed over all audible opposition, until the preservation of this dehumanised trade was enshrined as a fundamental article of policy.

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# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN THE URHOB0 COUNTRY (1891-1913).

by

A. SALUBI

THE URHOB0<sup>1</sup> people form one of the 7 indigenous ethnic groups<sup>2</sup> of the people in the Delta<sup>3</sup> Province of Western Nigeria. These groups are in four Administrative Divisions, one of which is Urhobo Division. It is therefore the Urhobo Division that is referred to broadly in this paper as the Urhobo Country. I say broadly because, in recent years the Isoko people who are also in the Division, have ceased to regard themselves as Urhobo.

According to the 1952 Census figures, there are 244,775 Urhobo out of a population of 590,966 for the whole Province. This represents roughly 41.42 per cent. The area of the Division, the second largest in the Province, is 1684 square miles, the population 323,315 and the density of population is therefore 191.99 to the square mile. The Urhobo are a heterogeneous people whose social organisation is based on small units, commonly called Clans. There are some 16 autonomous Clans each ruled by an Ovie<sup>5</sup> or an Okpako.<sup>6</sup>

1. The people have in the past been indiscriminately called "Subou", "Subo", "Sooba", "Uzobo", "Issobo", "Usobo" and "Sobo". Each of these is a corruption of "Urhobo". Urhobo is the name, and except "Uhobo" which is the Benin rendering, the people resent being called otherwise. Government recognised officially the term "Urhobo" in place of "Sobo" as from 1.10.38. See Government Notice No. 1228, p. 652 of Nigeria Gazette, No. 49 Vol. 25 of 8. 9. 38.
2. The other ethnic groups are Isoko, Ijo, Ukwuani, Aboh, Ndoni and Itsekiri.
3. The name of the Province was changed from "Warri" to "Delta" with effect from 26. 9. 52. See Public Notice No. 64 in Supplement to Nigeria Gazette No. 52, Vol. 39 of 2. 10. 52.  
The change was a direct result of the strong protest of the Urhobo people against the change of the traditional title of the head of the Itsekiri people from "Olu Itsekiri" to "Olu of Warri".
4. The term "Clan" has been used here in the sense in which Administrative Officers used it. Bradbury used the term "tribe". R. E. Bradbury. *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria* (1957) p. 128.
5. "Ovie" (plural Ivie) is the Urhobo rendering of Ogie (Benin) and Onogie (Ishan), each meaning a Head Chief over a clan. Only the Oba of Benin could confer the title before the days of British Government.
6. "Okpako" is the acknowledged oldest man of the clan or group.

For their origin, the people have always maintained that their ancestors who were the founders of their present country hailed from Benin which they call "Aka"<sup>1</sup>. In his book,<sup>2</sup> Rev. Hubbard identified the people with three other sources of origin, namely, *Erowha*, *Ijo*, and *Ibo*.<sup>3</sup> It is believed that the Urhobo had settled in the Delta Province before - probably long before - the beginning of the 15th century.<sup>4</sup>

The Urhobo country (except that part of it lying to the east and bordering on the Niger and its creeks) constitutes the main dry land of the Delta Province. Generally, all the country is flat and well within the zone of the evergreen tropical forest dominated by the ubiquitous West Coast oil-palm. The Division<sup>5</sup> is bounded on the South by Western Ijo Division, on the West by Warri Division, on the East by Aboh Division, and on the North by the River *Ethiope*<sup>6</sup> except at the north west where the line embraced a strip of land on the right bank of the River.

The people are given to agriculture and owing to their system of shifting cultivation and the habit of living in small scattered groups in villages, the bulk of the vegetation consists of secondary growth springing up rapidly on temporarily abandoned farmlands. Owing to population pressure on the land, about 97,000 Urhobo people live away from home in Lagos Township and in 20 other Divisions in the Western Region alone.<sup>7</sup>

1. The name "Aka" is said to have been derived from "Egbeaka" the name of one of the former Obas of Benin believed to have reigned about 1370. The name "Edo" is sometimes, not often, used.
2. *The Sobo of the Niger Delta* (1948).
3. With all respects to the learned Reverend gentleman, it is very doubtful whether the assimilation of Ijo and Ibo by the Urhobo people is on as large a scale as he portrays.
4. P. A. Talbot—*The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. I, p. 318.
5. At the beginning of the British Administration, the Urhobo people were, for administrative purposes, grouped in about four different Divisions. Some were under Benin, some under the same Division with either Ukwuani, or Itsekiri people; however, changes occurred from time to time until 1951, when all the Urhobo people were included in the Urhobo Division. For the description of the administrative boundary of the Division, see Public Notice No. 28, p. 116, Supplement to Nigeria Gazette, No. 9, Vol. 38 of 15. 2. 51.
6. At a point about 60 miles from the sea (Sapele), the Benin River divides itself into two branches. In 1840, during his exploration of the River, John Beecroft named the southern branch, leading to the Urhobo country, "*Ethiope*", after "*Ethiope*", the 30 horse-power craft which he used for the voyage. The craft belonged to his employer, Mr. Robert Jamieson, a West African merchant of Glasgow, who had then considerable trading interests in the Oil Rivers.  
A year before, Mr. Jamieson had named the northern branch "Jamieson" after himself. See A. F. Mockler-Ferryman—*British West Africa* (1898) p. 288, and also "*Journeys in the Benin Country, West Africa*" by Capt. H. L. Gallwey, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. I, 1893, pp. 122-130.
7. Figures obtained from Bulletins Nos. 2 to 9 of the Population Census of the Western Region of Nigeria, 1952.



### *The Knowledge of early Europeans about Urhobo*

The story of European enterprise and influence in the Bight of Benin is too well-known to deserve recapitulation here. Various writers have given interesting accounts of the Portuguese discovery of Benin in 1472, of the trade and the missionary activities that followed the discovery, and of the keen competition which other European nations like England, Holland and France etc., successfully organised against Portugal in her exploits in the Bight of Benin. For some 420 years, the selling and buying of commodities between Europeans and Africans of the Benin Coast had brought about a civilisation, a culture contact, exchange of ideas, and a mingling of peoples about which the Urhobo people in the hinterland knew practically nothing. How much the Europeans on the coast knew about the Urhobo people was clearly very little since there was no direct contact of any kind; the Europeans relied on the different stories which African traders of the coast, mainly Itsekiri, told them.

What seemed to be the earliest reference on record to the Urhobo people was made by *Duarte Pacheco Pereira*, who, while describing *Rio Dos Forcados* (Forcados River) said among other things, "Farther in the interior is another country called *Subou*, which is densely populated..."<sup>1</sup> Between 1839 and 1840 Dr. Daniell and Mr. John Beecroft navigated the Benin River and attempted to learn something about the Urhobo country and its people. Dr. Daniell tells us that "The Subo country consists of an extensive series of fertile plains, thirty miles above Reggio"<sup>2</sup>, "beautifully ornamented with park-like clumps of trees and verdure of the freshest tint..."<sup>3</sup>

Beecroft's purpose of exploring the Benin River in April, 1840, was to ascertain whether an approach through the river to the main body of the Niger, without having to go through the pestiferous swamps of its delta, was possible. That took him to the highest point navigable on that part of the River leading to the Urhobo

1. Duarte Pacheco Pereira—*Esmeraldo De Situ Orbis*, p. 129. Translated and edited by George H. T. Kimble (1937). The exact period of Pereira's voyage would appear to be unknown but it is believed that his book was written between 1505 and 1508.
2. "Reggio"—"Reggio" or "Rego", according to Sir Richard Burton, the town was named after Elusa's father. See "*My Wanderings in West Africa*" by "*An F.R.G.S.*" *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. LXVII, March 1863 pp. 273-289. The town was situated on the point between Ughoton (Gwato) Creek and Benin River. It was shown on an 1829 map. C. O. Maps 700. "Reggio" or "Rego" was probably a corruption of Erejuwa.
3. Dr. William F. Daniell—*Sketches of the Medical Topography and Native Diseases of the Gulf of Guinea West Africa* (1849) p. 47.

country. Beecroft says that the name given to the district by natives lower down the river who represented it as forming part of the Kingdom of Benin was *Sooba*.<sup>1</sup>

In the narrative of his voyage of the Niger in 1854, Dr. William Balfour Baikie wrote of the Urhobo as a "people speaking a distinct language who bring palm-oil to the trading ships, and who are called Sobo, being tributary to Benin".<sup>2</sup> Writing in 1863, Sir Richard Francis Burton confirmed what appeared clearly to be an earlier information by Beecroft and added "I believe that the word" (*Sooba*) "applies to the greatest part of the country between Abo on the Niger, the Warri River, and the southern branch of the Benin which bounds it on the north. . . ." "At Warri we were within one day's row of the Sobo people".<sup>3</sup>

Fifty years after Beecroft's attempt had passed, and still Europeans, on the coast or elsewhere, did not know much about the Urhobo people. Thus in 1890, Sir Alfred Moloney, then Governor of Lagos, told a London audience what at best was hearsay that in addition to the Benins, Jakrymen, and Ijohs, much was heard in these parts of the *Issobos* or *Sobos*, who were described as people tributary (they have been so for generations) to . . . Benin. He described them as industrious, agricultural and oil manufacturers, and their language as having great affinity with the Benin language in many ways.<sup>4</sup>

About the same period, the Intelligence Division of the War Office in England, recorded the Sobos and the Binis as occupying the country north of the Wari, west of the Niger, and west and east of the Benin River; they were described as seeming to be a shy and timid race, given to agriculture rather than trade and as being more or less under the suzerainty of the King of Benin.<sup>5</sup>

For many years, European traders on the coast wanted to reach the interior people who were the oil-producers, but the African middlemen, who were natives of the coast, did not permit them. It was a part of the middlemen's design deliberately to malign or

1. John Beecroft—"On Benin and the Upper Course of the River Quorra or Niger". Communicated to the Royal Geographical Society by Robert Jamieson. See Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. II, 1841, from p. 184.
2. Dr. William Balfour Baikie—*The Narrative of an Exploring Voyage Up the Rivers Kwora and Binue* (1854) p. 339.
3. "An F.R.G.S."—(Sir Richard Burton) "*My Wanderings in West Africa*" by Fraser's Magazine, Vol. LXVII February, 1863, p. 145. The Warri visited by Burton was Ode-Itsekiri, not the present Warri Township.
4. Sir Alfred Moloney—"Notes on Yoruba and the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos, West Africa". Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. XII, pp. 596-614.
5. Major L. Darwin. R. E.—*Precis of Information concerning the Niger Territories with Maps*, prepared at the Intelligence Division of the War Office (1890).

blackmail the interior people to the Europeans, and the Europeans to the interior people.<sup>1</sup> The total exclusion of the European traders from any contact with the hinterland people suited the middlemen's purpose eminently well. As agents between the interior and the coast, many of them had become very wealthy and influential - a position which they very jealously guarded. The jealousy was based on the fears of losing their powerful advantageous position.

*Projected Exploration of the Country by Consular Officers.*

Beside these few references, the riddle of the Urhobo people and their country remained unsolved until late 1891, when the Government of the Niger Coast Protectorate (formerly Oil Rivers Protectorate) was established on the coast. It was left to Captain H. L. Gallwey<sup>2</sup> as will be seen presently, to solve the riddle.

Two of the six Consular districts under the Niger Coast Protectorate Government were established on the Benin, and the Forcados Rivers, the latter being shortly removed to Warri trading station, now the Warri Township. The two districts formed the bases from which the Consular Officers penetrated into the interior.

In order to be assured of an adequate and effective force readily available, it was necessary to have a constabulary post somewhere in the districts. Calabar, where the main force for the Protectorate was to be stationed, was too far away. Therefore one of the first assignments to Captain Gallwey was the survey in October, 1891, of the Urhobo oil-markets along the Ethiope River, with a view, among other things, to selecting suitable sites for a Vice-Consulate, barracks and constabulary posts. Sapele,<sup>3</sup> a small Urhobo village, on the left bank of the Ethiope River, about 55 miles from the Benin Vice-Consulate, appealed to Captain Gallwey.

1. When I was a boy, there was a story that the white men who made the clothes we wore, were fairies with tails living in tree-holes in a far away bush where a kind of dumb barter or silent trade with them took place.
2. Capt. (later Sir) Henry Lionel Gallwey of East Lancashire Regiment was the first Vice-Consul at Benin River. From there he did a valuable piece of pioneer work in the north-eastern part of the Urhobo country. Gallwey claimed to be not only the first European to get as far inland as he did, but also to hold meetings with the people.

As the founder of the present Sapele Township, the Sapele Urban District Council will do well one of these days to honour his memory by naming at least a street after him.

3. "Sapele"—This is the European rendering of "*Urhiapele*" which is the Urhobo name for the village. It is a combination of two words "*Urhie*" and "*Apele*". "*Urhie*" means river or stream, and "*Apele*" was the name of the Juju of the Urhobo owners of the village. "*Urhiapele*"; therefore, means the "River or Stream of the juju, Apele".



In his report to Major Macdonald,<sup>1</sup> Gallwey said, "The anchorage here is deep and roomy, and the ground high, though one mass of forest. A most suitable spot to establish factories, especially as all the produce from the Sobo markets passes here on the way to the towns near the mouth of the river". He, therefore, recommended Sapele, which he called the first Sobo market, to be a very good place to establish a Vice-Consulate and constabulary barracks.<sup>2</sup>

Macdonald visited Sapele in the following month and approved it as being eminently suitable for the purpose for which Gallwey recommended it. The Urhobo people there assured him that, if he would come and build there, they would clear as much ground as he wanted.<sup>3</sup> That was the origin of the present Sapele Township.

The two powerful Africans preventing European penetration of the hinterland of the Benin and the nearby rivers, were, firstly, Chief Nana who lived in a creek near the mouth of the Benin River, and secondly, the Oba of Benin. In fairness to Chief Nana however, it must be recorded that he made no open opposition when, barely two months after the inception of the Protectorate Government, Captain Gallwey penetrated into the Urhobo country. Gallwey recorded that the Chief consented when consulted about the proposal to establish at Sapele.

Proving his support and co-operation for the Protectorate Government at his trial at Calabar in December, 1894, Chief Nana himself said "I assisted the Government when they went up to Sapele first in getting ground"<sup>4</sup>. The reason for the Chief's agreeable attitude must be obvious to any one who has studied Benin River affairs up to that time. Chief Nana was already losing popularity and his hold over his own Itsekiri people, and was fully aware of the British Government's intention to put an end to his power. To that end, his rivals and enemies, all Itsekiri people, were solidly behind the Government.

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1. Major (later Sir) Claude Maxwell Macdonald an Officer of the Highland Light Infantry. Formerly Acting British Agent and Consul-General at Zanzibar. F. O. 84/1941. Appointed later Her Britannic Majesty's Special Commissioner to the Niger and Oil Rivers, December, 1888, to inquire, among other things, into the dispute between the Royal Niger Company and the European merchants at Benin River concerning the Warri Oil Markets. F. O. 84/1881.

Macdonald became the Commissioner and Consul-General of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, with headquarters at Calabar from 1891 to 1896.

2. Capt. H. L. Gallwey—Report on visit to the Sobo and Abrakar Markets, dated 3. 11. 91. F. O. 84/2111, pp. 473-482.

3. Major Macdonald's Despatch No. 30 of 12. 12. 91 to the Foreign Office.

4. Chief Nana's evidence given on 6th December, 1894, at his trial at the Consular Court, Calabar. Further Correspondence Respecting the Niger Territories, January-June, 1895. Inclosure in No. 71, p. 46a.

In view of the important role which Chief Nana played in the trade and related affairs of Benin River, particularly in regard to trade in the Urhobo oil-markets, it is necessary to ask for indulgence to digress a bit to be able to say a word here about the Chief. Mr. Neville and Mr. P. C. Lloyd have contributed articles, each giving some personal details about the Chief;<sup>1</sup> it is unnecessary here, therefore, to touch on the points already covered. Suffice it to say, however, that Chief Nana's mother was an Urhobo woman married from the Agbamu-Elemodia family, a well-known family in *Evhro* (Effuru), 5 miles from Warri Township. The Chief himself was always proud of his maternal connection with Urhobo.<sup>2</sup>

Many European Merchants, Missionaries, Explorers and Consular Officers who visited the Benin River in the second half of the last century, and had occasion to meet Chief Nana, had nothing but great admiration for his outstanding personality, intelligence, wealth and hospitality. His ability to speak the Urhobo language coupled with his liberality won for him the favour of practically all Urhobo traders on the River. He, of course, had enough force to bring to submission any one who was so unreasonably stubborn as to interfere with his trade anywhere. For many years, he concentrated his commercial activities on the Urhobo oil-markets until he practically established a perfect monopoly over all the oil-markets.

Chief Nana did not establish any form of native government in Urhobo land. All his interest was in trade, and only when his trade was interrupted was there any friction between his canoe-boys and the people. In many cases, settlement of such frictions was peaceful. But most of the immediate causes of the Chief's trouble, leading to his fall in 1894, were related to his trade dealings with the Urhobo people.

By the end of 1893, the Vice-Consuls at Benin River had started to accuse the Chief of gross disloyalty to the Government; but his actions, usually through his trading boys, appeared to reach a climax, when in July, 1894, his boys seized fifteen Urhobo people (including a local Chief's wife), for an alleged debt of 200 puncheons of palm-oil.<sup>3</sup> It was when Chief Nana refused to surrender those captives, blockading the River instead, that the Government was obliged to use force to overthrow him towards the end of 1894. With the capture of the Oba of Benin 3 years later, all obstructions to penetration of the interior were removed.

1. Geo. W. Neville—"Nana Olomu of Benin" *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. XIV, No. LIV, January, 1915, pp. 162-167.  
P. C. Lloyd—"Nana Olomu—Governor of the River". *West Africa*, No. 2098 of 29. 6. 57, pp. 609 and 610.
2. Chief Nana told Mr. Coxon, who gave him friendly advice just before his trouble, that he would remove from Brohemie to his mother's country (Effuru), if the trouble at Benin River was too much for him. Mr. Coxon was a trader at Benin River for 18 years. F. O. 2/63 pp. 266-268.
3. Mr. Ralph F. Locke, Consular Agent, Benin Vice-Consulate's letter dated 10 July 1894 to Chief Nana. This was among documents found in Chief Nana's box. F. O. 2/64, p. 353.

### *Protection Treaties with Urhobo Chiefs.*

About 2½ years before Chief Nana's fall, the Urhobo Chiefs of Abraka, north east of the Benin Consular district had concluded a Treaty of Protection with Her Britannic Majesty's Government, placing themselves and their people under British protection.<sup>1</sup> In the south and the south-east of the Urhobo country under Warri district not less than 14 such Treaties had also been entered into. The Treaty-making activities were however intensified after the fall of Chief Nana.

It is also clear from some of the earlier Treaties that the Protectorate Government did not wait for the enactment of Order in Council of 1893, before penetrating into the hinterland of what was hitherto a virtual, sea-coast Protectorate. Thus in 1892, Sapele became a Vice-Consulate when a hulk<sup>2</sup> serving not only as a Vice-Consulate, but also as a prison and barracks, was towed there. The Sapele Vice-Consulate soon became important, as in 1895, the Benin River Vice-Consulate was, except as a Customs port,<sup>3</sup> closed and removed to Sapele. The closure of the Benin River Vice-Consulate in favour of Sapele had a considerable historical and economic significance. In the first place, it marked the end, after some 433 years, of European enterprise in that part of the historic River, and, in the second place, it broke the barrier almost completely of the Itsekiri middlemen in the matter of trade.

Although a beginning of British administration of the Urhobo country had nearly been completed, yet no further effective practical steps to govern could be taken, ready and anxious as both the Consular Government and the Urhobo people were. The Government ran up against the difficulty of an administrative boundary between itself and the Royal Niger Company.

Arising from an earlier dispute over the Niger Basin by the Forcados River, over which Major Macdonald was appointed a Commissioner in 1889, the Major had recommended in his report<sup>4</sup>

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1. That was 8 years after Chief Nana signed a similar Treaty placing himself and the Itsekiri people under British Protection.
  2. The hulk cost £1,800; a further £1,800 was spent in adapting it for the purposes of the Government. F. O. 84/2194, pp. 330-331. It was called the "*Hindustan*". F. O. 2/186.
  3. The Customs port was eventually closed in 1905 when Koko became a port. Koko also known as "*Koka*" or "*Capp's Town*". R. E. Dennett, *Report on Forestry Work In The Western Division*, January 1906; also C. O. 591/2, p. 653. It is a small village shown on all maps before 1900 (seen so far) as Capp's Town.

It is believed to be the personal name of a local Chief. Sir Alan Burns (personal communication).

Messrs Mc Neil & Scott, and Bey and Zimmer established a port there in 1905. Other large traders of Benin River soon followed.

It was constituted a European Reservation with a Sanitary Board in 1907.

4. Report by Major Macdonald of his visit as Her Majesty's Commissioner to the Niger and Oil Rivers. Chapter VII. B. S. 14/37, (British Museum).



some arrangement to fix a boundary between the disputants.<sup>1</sup> When two years later, the Major was commissioned to establish the new Protectorate Government, one of his first duties in London, was to fix that boundary, known as the Provisional Boundary Line, between his Government and the Royal Niger Company.

Because of the great part which the boundary delimitation subsequently played in the matter of administration of the Urhobo country, the text of its description is quoted hereunder.

"On the west of the Niger River the line starts at the middle of the mouth of the Forcados River, follows that river midway to the mouth of the Warri Creek, and follows that creek midway up to a point  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles below the mouth of the creek leading to Oagbi and Akiabodo. From that point the line runs to the north-east for 10 miles, and thence due north for 50 miles..."<sup>2</sup>

The effect of the demarcation was that all the country lying to the west of the Line was within the jurisdiction of the Niger Coast Protectorate Government, and similarly, all the country lying to the east of the Line was regarded as being within the territories of the Company.

#### *Dispute arising from the Provisional Boundary Line.*

One of the most significant consequences of the Provisional Boundary Line did not present itself until 1895, 4 years after it had been drawn. Protection Treaties concluded with five Urhobo towns<sup>3</sup> were, in accordance with the understanding between the Foreign Office and the Royal Niger Company, referred to the Governor and Council of the Company for affirmation. The Company wrote back claiming that the 5 Treaties concerned a group of towns considerably to the east of the Provisional Line, and were, therefore, in its area of jurisdiction, and that what was more, the Company had already concluded Treaties with each of the five towns. It was pointed out that the only difference was in the spelling of the names of the towns. So strong and clear was the Royal Niger Company's case that the Foreign Office was obliged to agree eventually that both their own and the Company's Treaties covered the same towns.

1. Parties to the dispute were the Government of Lagos which then depended on the Forcados as a port, the European merchants of Benin River, and the Royal Niger Company. The first two accused the Company of encroaching on the Forcados River by making Treaties with the local Chiefs, thereby capturing what were then known as the Wari Oil Markets. The markets were claimed by the Benin River merchants as theirs. Major Macdonald found in favour of the Royal Niger Company.
2. The line was drawn subject to modification by further delimitation according to local requirements but the Company later rejected the idea of any modification.
3. The five towns were Okpara, Uwhokori (*Kokori*), Oria, Eko (Eku), and Igu. All in the Agbon and Abraka clan areas in Western Urhobo.

It was however suggested that as Sir John Kirk was shortly going out to the West Coast, for the purpose of investigating the circumstances of the attack at Akassa by the Brass people, he might take the opportunity to look into the matter.<sup>1</sup>

In June 1895, Sir John reported inability to decide the issue one way or the other. To him, the necessity to come to any decision was questionable since the area concerned was occupied by neither the Protectorate Government nor the Royal Niger Company. After describing the upper reaches of the Ethiopie river which waters, on the west, the area in dispute, and the Ase creek which waters it on the east, Sir John concluded that actual boundary could not be fixed until more was known of the geography of the country; he recommended that, for the time being, the trade of the towns concerned should be left to take their natural water course.<sup>2</sup>

The Foreign Office therefore, had no alternative but to advise the Niger Coast Protectorate Government to stop its officers visiting any more those parts of the Urhobo country. Thus, what was apparently the high hopes of the Consular officers, and the expectations of the Urhobo people for a coming administration, were dashed to pieces, at least for the time being.

But the Consular Officers were dogged; instead of abiding by the Foreign Office's advice, they continued visiting the Urhobo and the Ukwuani countries, entering into more Treaties with the people. Mr. John Mc. Taggart,<sup>3</sup> the Chief Officer in charge of the Royal Niger Company's patrol team, was not to be beaten in the race. The fall of Benin was to him an impetus for extensive patrolling activities, not only in the Urhobo and the Ukwuani countries, but also in the Ika (Agbor), Ishan, Afemai (Kukuruku) and the Ora countries. On an earlier occasion, he even marched into Benin.

The whole situation was one of real jealousy and competitive scramble, and, at one stage of it, an open clash between the officers of the two administrations seemed imminent. And so that disquieting situation continued for two long years ending in November, 1897, when the Foreign Office was again obliged to tell Sir Ralph Moor, then the head of the Niger Coast Protectorate Government, of the importance which Her Majesty's Government attached to the

1. Foreign Office's letter dated 9. 5. 1895 to Sir John Kirk. Further Correspondence respecting the Niger Territories, January to June, 1895, p. 176.
2. Sir John Kirk's report dated 30. 6. 1895 to the Earl of Kimberly. Further Correspondence Respecting the Niger Territories, July to December, 1895, p. 67.
3. The personal name "*Itaga*" still common among eastern Urhobo people is a corruption of "*Targart*". There was a soap (Carbolic soap) called "*Odja r'itaga*" meaning "*Itaga's Soap*". It was named after Targart because it was sold by the Royal Niger Company. The Company's trading beaches themselves were known as "*Oto r'itaga*"—"Targart's beaches or shops".

avoidance of both administrations alike of any action on the frontier likely to provoke friction between them. The despatch ended by saying "Lord Salisbury feels sure that no effort on your part will be wanting to avoid such friction"<sup>1</sup>.

Sir Ralph Moor reluctantly obeyed, instructing his officers to take as little action as possible for the present, in the direction of the left bank of the Ethiopie River, and in the interior of the Urhobo country. Sir Ralph opined however, that the decision was a retrograde step and one that would result in the work already done in that direction having to be done again in the future.<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of the Protectorate Government was in a sense quite understandable. The restricted movement of its officers did not permit them to move farther than 15 miles from Sapele on the north, and at Warri on the south the distance was much less. And yet most of the important oil markets, especially those in the north east, formerly monopolized by Chief Nana, were beyond—some much beyond—the boundary line, and well within the Company's territories. The unaccepted argument of the Protectorate Officers was that their conquest of the Chief automatically bestowed upon them the right to all those markets.

### *The Consequences of the Dispute in Urhobo.*

The Urhobo had always known and talked of two "Akpo".<sup>3</sup> The first and the only one known and recognised by them before the British Government, was "Akpo r' Oba" ("the Oba's world"). The second, which was coming to oust the first, was "Akpo r' Oyinbo" ("the white man's world"). It was most difficult, if not altogether impossible, at that time, to take governmental affairs to Benin. The momentum against the Oba's rule and power was then gathering. The Consular government that was to come to replace the time-honoured regime of Benin, was not seen. The Royal Niger Company did nothing more than enter into Treaties. Absolute vacuum and dilemma therefore emerged. In the unhappy circumstances, the state of chaos and disorder that ensued can be better imagined than described.

Writing about the situation a few years later, Mr. Henry Morley of the Royal Niger Company described a confused situation where the officers of the Niger Coast Protectorate, the Governor of Lagos, the officers of the West African Frontier Force, and the Government of his Company each in turn gave orders to native rulers, or exercised authority in the Company's Territories, without prior consultation with each other. To his mind, the situation was deplorable and probably unprecedented in the history of any government of any modern country not actually suffering from war or revolution.

1. The Marquess of Salisbury's Despatch No. 192 of 2. 11. 1897 to Sir Ralph Moor.
2. Sir Ralph Moor's despatch No. 11 of 12. 1. 1898 to the Marquess of Salisbury.
3. "Akpo" means "world" and in this concept "world" means regime.



It is interesting to read what was said to be happening in the Urhobo country, and the feelings of the people during an anarchy which lasted some 5 years. The people developed a deep feeling of disappointment and of neglect by the British government. A very natural feeling after about 7 years of submitting themselves by Treaty to the Government. They could not understand why restrictions had to be placed on the Consular Officers' movement, thus preventing their visits as formerly. Government however decided well to sustain their confidence by continuing the payment of any subsidies previously paid.<sup>1</sup>

The situation described above could not exist without some acts of atrocity. All the way from Abraka<sup>2</sup> the dead body and decapitated head of Chief Akatamu were brought to the District Commissioner at Sapele. The reason for the outrage by the Orogun people being that the Chief took upon himself to decide a case between two groups of people in the Orogun area instead of referring it to the Consul.<sup>3</sup> Two other isolated cases of armed fighting with considerable sacrifice of life were reported from around the same area. The disturbing situation led to inevitable stoppage of the local trade; and there was a danger of more of the waterside markets being closed owing to troubles in the interior Urhobo towns.

By that time, it became quite obvious that the officers of the Royal Niger Company, who had hitherto made no attempt to govern, were still not in a position to do anything. The Company was about winding up. And so in January, 1899, after merely informing Mr. John Flint, the Agent-General of the Company at Burutu, Sir Ralph Moor instructed his officers to proceed with an escort of 25 men to all the subsidized Urhobo market towns, telegraphing the Colonial Office thereafter that the Urhobo and the other neighbouring countries be regarded thenceforth as being under the Niger Coast Protectorate<sup>4</sup>. Mr. Flint referred the matter to London, the Governor of the Company condemned Sir Ralph's action as being most reprehensible, but there the matter died.

The scramble for power in Urhobo land then came to an end. The Royal Niger Company wound up. The taking over of its assets in the latter part of 1899, by the British Government gave a free hand

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1. Annual Report of the Niger Coast Protectorate 1897-8. Gallwey's despatch No. 151 of 1. 9. 1898. F. O. 2/180.

2. "Abraka" is an important district north east of the Urhobo country and is 36 miles from Sapele by land. The Chiefs there entered into Treaty with the Government on 9.5.1892 and from information so far available, were the first Urhobo Chiefs to do so. They were quickly followed on the next day by *Ogborikoko* in the south in Warri district.

3. Sir Ralph Moor's Despatch No. 77 of 23.5. 1899. C.O. 444/1, Vol.1.

It will be surprising if there was no more reason for the outrage than the one given by the District Commissioner. The Abraka and the Orogun people (both Urhobo) have been known to be quarrelling from time to time over land disputes, the most recent occurring only a few years ago when several lives were alleged to have been lost on both sides.

4. Sir Ralph Moor's Despatch No. 66 of 14.4. 1899. C.O. 444/1, Vol. 1.

to the Protectorate Government to organise and establish properly, for the first time, the administration of the Urhobo country. In this sense, it can be regarded that British administration in Urhobo land commenced only from 1900.

### *The Role of Political Agents in Establishing the Administration.*

A paper of this nature will be incomplete without reference to the important role which African middlemen played in assisting the government to achieve its objects. This time, the reference is to Political middlemen, known in those days as Political Agents. Three such Political Agents were known to the early history of the British administration in Urhobo. They were George Eyube<sup>1</sup>, Tom Falladoh, and Chief Dore Numa. As was said before, Protectorate Officers' penetration of the Urhobo country was, initially, in two processions, that is to say, from Warri and Benin River (later Sapele). After 1900 however, two other processions from Abraka and Agberi formed, penetrating respectively from the north east, and the south east, of the country. The Warri procession was spear-headed by Chief George Eyube, the Abraka one by Tom Falladoh,<sup>2</sup> the Benin River by Chief Dore Numa, while the Agberi procession appeared to have been conducted by Protectorate Officers themselves.

As an escort to the Government up to 1896, a small Government post was opened for Tom Falladoh with two others assisting at Abraka. His functions consisted in explaining to the people Government's purposes, encouraging them not only to increase trade but also to plant cash crops, and in keeping Government informed of what was happening in that part of the country. There could be no doubt that Tom Falladoh acquitted himself well for he became a Political Agent in the following year. But there was evidence that this bold man (as might be expected of people left altogether on their own in those conditions, away from the range of a close watch) often exceeded his duties.

In March, 1898, Mr. Henry Lyon of Benin District Office replying his opposite number at Sapele about Falladoh said, "I am sending you later a report on Falladoh's conduct as Political Officer in Abraka and Quale countries—as you may hear at Benin City some rumours of the way he has carried on his work—Falladoh at present is in custody and every day I get more evidence of his doings in these countries such as looting and burning towns—If you hear any palavers about him I hope you will let me know"<sup>3</sup>.

1. The little that is known about George Eyube of Igbogidi is that he died in May, 1901, at the early stage of his career from injuries from an accident from his own pistol during the patrol to Orhokpo in Urhobo.
2. Tom Falladoh was an Ekiti Yoruba from Emure. His real name was *Falodun* but the Urohbo called him *Fenedo*. In connection with his work described above, he got the Abraka people to establish the Abraka water-side market (*Erhor*), sometimes called "*Erhor ro Fenedo*". With the introduction of Native Councils in 1900, he became a leading member of the Native Council at Abraka where he lived for many years before retiring home. Later in life, he founded and lived in a small village near Ekiadolor in Benin.
3. Political Papers, District Office, Benin City. P 16/98.

After Chief Nana, the next person among the Itsekiri who came to prominence was Chief Dore<sup>1</sup> Numa, a great friend of the Government. During the Nana and the Benin Expeditions he was solidly behind the Government rendering invaluable services which were later recognised and rewarded. By the beginning of this century, he had risen to a height which made him to be not only the head of the Itsekiri, but also an indispensable person to Government in its dealings with the Urhobo and the Ijoh people. It was in that capacity that he signed in 1908, for and on behalf of the Chiefs and the people of Sapele, the lease to the Government of Sapele land<sup>2</sup>.

As Warri was by 1901 fast becoming the headquarters, Chief Dore, "pushed his way to Warri"<sup>3</sup>. The fact that more than half of the Urhobo country was then under the Warri Division gave the Chief free play in purely Urhobo affairs. As the President of the highest Native Court for many years, no Urhobo, however important or influential, could be made a Warrant Chief without Chief Dore's recommendation. Although some Urhobo Chiefs sat with him as assessors to take appeals in cases from their areas, Dore often had the last say.

So high was the esteem and power conferred on him by Government, that even in 1918 when, in accordance with tradition, two<sup>4</sup> Urhobo Ivie applied to Benin for confirmation of their title, the Resident advised the Oba not to grant the title without Chief Dore's expressed consent. In rejecting one of the applications, the Resident said he did not think it advisable for the Oba to grant the title as it would involve the Ovie coming regularly to Benin to see the Oba, and that must, inevitably, tend to lessen Chief Dore's authority.

1. "Dore" is the European rendering of "*Idocho*" also believed to be an abbreviation of an Itsekiri name. Like most Itsekiri, Dore was a trader. He started his semi-official career as a Native Interpreter at the Benin River Vice-Consulate and was made a Political Agent 1896, a Warrant Chief, 1902, and, an Unofficial Member of the Nigerian Council, 1914.

For his services to the Government during the Nana and the Benin Expeditions, he was mentioned in despatches, awarded medals and a combined set of clasps in May 1899: Niger Coast Despatches, 1899, Vol. 3, C.O. 444/3.

Received the King's Medal for Chiefs in 1925; died 29.9.32. For further information about the Chief see William A. Moore - *History of Itsekiri*, Chapter XXII.

2. The Itsekiri people unsuccessfully claimed ownership of this land in 1941. Suit No. W/37/1941.
3. William A. Moore - Op. cit, p. 119. The Chief was an Itsekiri of Batere, Benin River. Odogene was his new village near Warri.
4. Those were the first applications after the 1897 Expedition. That stroke of the pen brought to an end ever since then a title custom that existed from time immemorial.



The last decade of the 19th century had passed with the not-too insignificant, but disturbed, achievement made in the attempt by the Protectorate Officers to govern the country, and the 20th century had arrived bringing in its wake the practical realities of establishing a firm and effective government. It would be an error of judgment to overlook or under-rate the magnitude and the urgency of the task called for by those realities.

While the towns already familiar with “*Kosini*”<sup>1</sup>, some of which had been enjoying their subsidies all along, waved their Treaties in a hearty welcome of the long expected government, many other interior towns had perhaps never heard, or only heard dimly, of the curious person called ‘the white man’. It would be too much to expect therefore, that some of those towns would not be indifferent, at least for the start, to the new order. As it was required to establish a foothold in districts where those towns existed, it was necessary to deal with each and every town or village therein, and there were a few hundreds of such towns or villages.

In order, therefore, to establish itself, the Government was obliged to tackle the hard tasks of

- (a) pacification, however small and inextensive in scale, of the country,
- (b) establishing a machinery for Indirect Rule through Chiefs and Headmen,
- (c) clearing and improving the rivers and creeks to facilitate trade, and
- (d) constructing roads to open up the country.

It must be appreciated that, in the circumstances of the situation, each of the tasks was one of extreme urgency and second to none in the matter of priority.

*(a) Pacification of the Country.*

Whether the more interior Urhobo would have resisted the government, if ever they could, is a question which admits of no consideration here at present; but it seems correct to say that the four punitive expeditions, two of them major, undertaken towards the close of the 19th century facilitated Government’s passage to the interior. The two major expeditions, namely, the Nana and the Benin Expeditions, though not directly connected with Urhobo land, had a very far reaching effect on the Urhobo people as a whole. Nana was respected and feared for his wealth and power, and the

1. “*Kosini*” is the Urhobo rendering of “*Consul*”. Some children born during the time of Consuls were named “*Kosini*” and the word has remained a personal name in Urhobo ever since.

Oba<sup>1</sup> of Benin for his suzerainty and juju power. Most Urhobo people did not believe that the Oba could be, and was in fact, captured by the white-man<sup>2</sup> because of their belief in his juju power to transform himself into a spirit. With the capture, therefore, of those two acknowledged powers, the Urhobo people had no choice but to submit to the conqueror.

The two other punishments, in the form of setting fire to each of two Urhobo towns, clearly brought home to the people the practical evidence of the white-man's superior power. Effuru was set on fire just a little over two months after concluding a Protection Treaty with the Government. A dispute leading to stoppage of trade and the refusal of the head Chief to answer charges connected therewith were given as the cause for that action. The head Chief (Arigbe) who was said to have caused the dispute was believed to be a staunch adherent of Chief Nana, and his actions were regarded as a demonstration in favour of the Chief.<sup>3</sup>

Accompanied by two other officers and 12 armed men from the Warri Consulate, Major Copland-Crawford set fire to a town<sup>4</sup> in the east, destroying only a part of it. The local inhabitants known to be seizing traders and produce passing through a creek nearby had shot a man. The refusal of the local Chief to surrender the offender, and the beating up of the Consulate Messenger sent to them necessitated the action.

Between 1901 and 1909, the Government was involved in a number of patrols. Beginning with Orhokpor in 1901, the Kwale Patrol followed in the first quarter of 1904. In order to be able to bring under effective control that part of the country however, it became necessary in 1905 to barrack<sup>5</sup> the Patrol unit permanently at Abraka, where, as stated earlier in the paper, a Government post had been established since 1896. The appointment of a District

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1. The Urhobo's other name for the Oba is "*Orovwa Akpo*" meaning "the owner of the world". That was, of course, the world as they then knew it.

2. "The Sobos declined to believe in the capture until they were shown the captive king at Warri." Reginald K. Granville and Felix N. Roth - *Notes on the Jekris, Sobos and Ijohs of the Warri District of the Niger Coast Protectorate*, (1898).

3. Sir Ralph Moor - Despatch to Foreign Office dated 8.8.1894. Lt. Commander Heugh - letter to Rear-Admiral Bedford dated 10.8.1894 - Correspondence respecting the Disturbances in Benin and the operations against the Chief Nana, 1894, pp. 4&6.

The Effuru Treaty was concluded on 5.6. 1894 and the town burnt on 8.8. 1894.

4. Copland - Crawford called the town "*Merrie*" - 30 minutes paddling from Orere creek. This is therefore likely to be "*Arhavbarien*". The incident occurred in May, 1896.

5. The station was known to the north-eastern people as "*Ebareki*" and has since become a personal name also.

The station was closed ultimately in about 1938 in favour of the present Kwale Divisional Office at *Obetim*.

Commissioner<sup>1</sup> to the station shortly after basing the unit strengthened the operation of the scheme for the administration of that part of the Urhobo country.

In April, 1907, it became necessary for a patrol from the Warri district to visit Agbassa and Iyede. The people of the former place had refused to receive the Government and were said to be a likely menace to the people of the surrounding country. Captain Beamish, with Mr. S. D. Simpson-Gray as Political Officer, visited and quieted the towns until early in 1908, when, owing to a further disturbed state of Agbassa, a small force under Captain Wayling, with Major H. O. Swainston as a Political Officer, entered the town on 4th February. After a few days, the people expressed willingness to submit to Government. The two head chiefs<sup>2</sup> captured were not allowed to return until the town became quite again.

As the whole area had been effectively controlled, the Kwale Patrol unit was withdrawn in April, 1909, and replaced by a Civil Police. One of the remarkable consequences of those patrols and Police movements reported, was the large number of cases of personation as Government Police or Messengers in the inland towns. The personators took payment for settling cases, inflicting fines, seizing and flogging people, and causing trouble in different ways<sup>3</sup>.

*(b) Establishing a Machinery for Indirect Rule through Chiefs and Headmen.*

With 1900 came a spate of enactments one of which is relevant here. It was The Native Courts Proclamation, No. 9 of 1900, amended in the following year by The Native Courts Proclamation No. 25. The Proclamations legalised the status and regularised the functions of Native Councils and Native Courts, a few of which had been in existence as far back as 1895. Two such Native Courts, serving the Urhobo country, were at Sapele and Warri. In 1900 however, more Courts were established in the more inland areas of the country.

The Native Councils and Native Courts system was a most important integral part in the machinery of indirect rule. Whatever the critic may have to say against the system, it is doubtful whether he can deny the hard fact that the Native Councils and Native Courts were the only means which the Government had then of reaching and governing the people.

1. The abbreviation "D.C." is the origin of "Idisi" which had since become a personal name in Urhobo. The first "D.C.", Mr. R.W. Bird, was posted to the station on 12.12. 1905.
2. Quarterly Report on Central Province, March 1908: Supplement to Southern Nigeria Government Gazette No. 60, Vol. 3 of 19.8.1908. The two head Chiefs (Ivie) were Owe and Uwerhiavwe.
3. Quarterly Report Agberi District dated 4.7. 1904: Gazette Op. cit. No. 16, Vol. 5, September 23, 1904.



The need for the Councils and Courts were such that between 1900 and 1904, Government established in the Urhobo country not less than 9 Native Courts, appointed 174 Warrant Chiefs with jurisdiction over 329 towns and villages. Two of the Courts (Sapele and Abraka, later Okpara Waterside) were in the west and the remaining seven in the east of the country.

The Native Councils, later known as Native Authorities, did not only function as executive bodies, but also as Appellate Courts to the Native Courts within their areas. Not only did these bodies take orders from the Government to the people but they had to ensure also that such orders were carried out. For the purpose of local administration, the Urhobo country was constituted into three Native Councils. The Sapele Native Council for the Sapele District area including Benin River, was split up in 1907 when the Abraka-Okpara Native Council was constituted. The remaining 7 Native Courts in the east, covering by far the greater part of the Urhobo country, were sub-ordinated to the Warri Native Council of which Chief Dore Numa was the President. Following a further re-organisation in 1914, by the passage of the Native Courts Ordinance No. VIII, Chief Dore Numa was made the Paramount Chief<sup>1</sup> of the Judicial Council, and in 1916, when the first Native Authority Ordinance was enacted, the Urhobo Native Authorities in the east and all others in the Warri Division, were again made subordinate to Chief Dore Numa.

Scarcity of court clerks was one of the difficulties that faced the working of the native court system in the early stages. In some cases, the District Officers themselves sat in the Courts occasionally as clerks and Presidents, and in other cases, one court clerk was made to run two or more courts in rotation.

The Annual Report for 1899 to 1900 recorded the views of Mr Menendez, Acting Chief Justice, "...that native administration under the supervision of the District Commissioners has worked exceedingly well"; he was reported to have particularly referred to the outstations of Warri and Sapele, where the gradual extension of the system had brought within the control of the Government numerous outlying villages whose previous attitude had been far from friendly<sup>2</sup>.

### *(c) Clearing and Improving Rivers and Creeks.*

Another enactment of some considerable importance was the Roads and Creeks Proclamation, No. 15 of 1903. On sufferance of

1. Chief Dore Numa's Presidentship of the Native Council and later his Paramount Chiefship of the Judicial Council, are the only bases of the claims of the Itsekiri people that the Urhobo people were once ruled by them, and nothing else in the history of the relationship of the two peoples.

The Chief's supreme position which he fully enjoyed till the late twenties of this century was the creation of the British Government.

2. Colonial Reports - Annual No. 315. C.O. 520/3, Southern Nigeria Despatches 1900, Vol. 3.

a penalty of £50 or 6 months' imprisonment in default, the Proclamation imposed it as a duty on the Chiefs and their people to clear and repair any roads, creeks or rivers within their districts, towns, villages, or places through which, or by which, such roads, creeks or rivers, or parts of such roads, creeks or rivers run.

Waterways were of course the first means of communication, and while the Chiefs and their people were required by law to keep them open, there was clearly a limit to what they could do having regard to the means at their disposal. Upon the newly established Marine Department fell therefore the duty of starting where community labour left off. Thus the first major marine clearing operations of the Ethiopie River at a cost of some £388 started in 1905. With the second operations at a cost of about £609 three years later, the whole River became safely navigable from Sapele to Kwale; and in 1911 when clearing reached the farthest point, or the River head at Umutu, timber traffic on the River became easy.<sup>1</sup>

Other rivers in the Benin and Agberi areas received similar attention from the Marine Department, and it was the policy of Government to encourage traders, mainly, Itsekiri and Yoruba to establish waterside markets along the banks of the rivers cleared.<sup>2</sup>

#### *(d) Constructing roads to open up the country*

One of the early steps taken by the British Consular and other political Officers to open the country was in regard to roads. It was part of their duty during their visits to map out the more important towns with a view to opening them up by means of roads which in the white man's sense did not exist. Between towns and villages only footpaths, most of which were difficult, and in some cases unsafe to negotiate, existed.

Accompanied by 5 orderlies, 28 carriers and a guide, Major Copland-Crawford, then Acting Consul, Warri Division, passed, in January 1896, through a number of these paths from the Warri Consulate to Sapele, that being the first time ever any European had undertaken a journey by land between the two towns. The primary purpose was to endeavour to open up land communication with Sapele by a direct route. The journey took 2 days but Copland-

1. The clearing work was not without its risks. In June 1906, Lt. Pierson and 13 of his waterway party working near Agberi on the Niger lost their lives when an explosion occurred.
2. Supplement to Southern Nigeria Government Gazette No. 24, Vol. 3 of 25.3.1908. C.O. 591/5.

The introduction of Itsekiri traders by Government to establish waterside markets along creeks or rivers in Urhobo land led to considerable administrative, and sometimes political, troubles many years after. Many of the Itsekiri settled in the various market places and that gave rise to the problems of what the later Administrative Officers called "Itsekiri Enclaves" on Urhobo land. The Enclaves problems were not satisfactorily solved until only a few years ago.

Crawford thought it could be half a day less in a straight through march with troops.<sup>1</sup>

But the real period of road-making did not begin in earnest until 1903 when the provisions of the Roads and Creeks Proclamation were applied.<sup>2</sup> One of the officers whose activities accelerated the construction of roads, but whose work was taken over in 1907 by the Superintendent of Roads, Roads Department, was the Travelling Commissioner for the Division.

While it was reported that some of the Chiefs cheerfully got their people to cut straight roads, others were said to be indifferent, and stringent measures had to be taken to enforce the required communal labour.<sup>3</sup> Most of the roads with planted shade trees in the Urhobo country were constructed between 1903 and 1910. In 1911 it was possible to motor in a light car on the triangular route of Warri-Sapele-Kwale, the oldest roads in Urhobo.

By 1906, the survey for a light railway or tramway to connect Sapele to Benin City was completed at a proposed estimate of £79,000 for a 2ft. 6ins. line and £105,000 for line wider by a foot. As the scheme was not however started before the amalgamation, Sir Walter Egerton rejected it as unballasted. He recommended instead the construction of a good metalled road.<sup>4</sup> But this same road was, in fact, not completely metalled until 1952 — 46 years later!

With roads connecting the larger and the more important towns, and the greater development of mutual confidence between the Political Officers and the people, the former began to undertake long tours, sleeping in the towns. That created the necessity for building Rest Houses, again by communal labour, for the convenience of the District Commissioners. The first of such Rest Houses built at Abraka in 1904 was followed, up to 1907, by not less than 17

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1. The Foreign Office forwarded the report with a map of this journey to the Royal Geography Society who published it in its journal.
  2. Even up till now the roads constructed at the instance of the Government usually 12 to 14 feet wide are still called "Idjere ro Oyinbo" ("the whiteman's road"). Those of them along which telegraph lines passed are referred to as "Idjere re Etaligrofo" ("telegraph roads").
  3. Road work by communal labour was usually divided up into tasks, each adult in the community being given a task to finish. I was old enough to be among my father's children who helped from time to time to do his task of grass cutting.  
The communal labour continued till 1928 when poll tax was introduced.
  4. Minutes of the Legislative Council meetings of August 15 and December, 26, 1906. Southern Nigeria Government Gazettes Nos. 23 & 42, Vol. I, of September 12 and December 26, 1906, respectively. C.O. 591/3.



others in various parts of the Urhobo country.<sup>1</sup>

With the arrival in January 1905 of Capt. J.P. Moir of the Telegraph Battalion, as Superintendent, Telegraph Construction, it was possible to complete the laying of telegraph lines between Warri and Sapele in that year.<sup>2</sup> An inland weekly mail service between Sapele and Kwale by runners started in 1906. In 1908, a telephone system was opened at Warri, and other places like Abeokuta, Afikpo and Obubra Hill.<sup>3</sup> However, the telecommunication position as at that period remained unextended until only a few years ago when telegraph facilities were extended to Abraka and Ughelli and a Telephone service to Aja-Igbodudu, Ughelli and Abraka.

### *Observations and Conclusions*

It may perhaps be appropriate here to say a few words about the period (1891-1913) covered by this paper. As will be remembered, Captain Gallwey, the Vice-Consul, Benin River District, made his first contact with the Urhobo of Sapele in late 1891. In 1900, the Niger Coast Protectorate Government started administration in earnest with a series of Proclamations with Rules and bye-laws etc. Those laws continued until 1906 when the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was amalgamated with the Colony of Lagos under one administration known as the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

Although such arrangement appeared not to have made any appreciable difference to the Urhobo country, yet it led to certain administrative adjustments and changes in the structure of governmental set-up. The situation again continued until the great amalgamation of Lord Lugard in 1914. As students of Nigerian Constitutions of that period know too well, a spate of new legislation accompanied that amalgamation. I am, therefore, of the opinion that by 1913 the foundation of British administration in Urhobo and in fact elsewhere in Nigeria, had been firmly established. Whatever followed after 1913 were in my view subsequent developments and improvements on the already established administration.

While it has not been the purpose of this paper to prove certain specific points, it has however endeavoured in a humble way to show briefly how very little was known by early Europeans of any walks of life about the Urhobo country and its people, for well over four centuries ending in 1891. And yet the country or a part of it is

1. The Rest House at Ovu Inland, my home town, was after a few years roofed in 1909 with corrugated iron sheets bought by my father at the request of the community. The cost was later repaid in kind i.e. by reserving for him for an agreed period the palm-oil from a portion of the communal palm forest.
2. Annual Report Western Division (1905) Southern Nigeria Government Gazette No. 2, Vol. I of 9. 5. 1903. C. O. 591/3.
3. For references regarding inland weekly mail service and telephone service, see Southern Nigeria Government Gazette No. 72, Vol. 2 of 18. 12. 1907. C. O. 591/4, and Colonial Reports—Annual (No. 630) 1908, respectively.

contiguous on the Benin River, the scene of a great historic European enterprise with the sea-coast Africans.

The paper has told the story of an unfortunate dispute arising from a boundary line drawn and agreed on paper in London which delayed for some 5 years the commencement of direct trading with the white man, and therefore of contact with the civilizing influence that accompanied it.

The paper has also endeavoured to show that contrary to what many people in Nigeria or elsewhere have been told, the Urhobo had before the British Administration always been a separate and distinct people under the suzerainty of Benin, not under any other ruler as Dr. Talbot conjectured.<sup>1</sup> The paper has shown further that the Ivie and the Chiefs of the Urhobo country were sufficiently separate and distinct to be recognised as authorities in their various little domains to enter into Treaties of Protection with the British Government.

Earlier in the paper, a reference was made to the role successfully played for many years by the wealthy middlemen of the Coast in their two-way tactics of misrepresenting the white-man, even including the Consul in some cases, to the Urhobo people on the one hand, and the Urhobo people to the white-man on the other. The Urhobo people were called all sorts of vicious names and described in a most humiliating and discreditable way to the white-man and the outside world.

But the Protectorate Officers soon discovered the trick as will be appreciated from what Sir Ralph Moor himself said on the point. He said, the Consul had been so grossly misrepresented in the past by native traders and others, to serve their own ends, that his coming was greatly feared by the natives of the interior. The Consul's name had been used indiscriminately by the Coast traders as a sort of "bogey" with which to frighten the natives into compliance with their wishes which were often of a nefarious character.<sup>2</sup>

While it is true that the two major punitive expeditions against, Chief Nana and the Oba and the minor sporadic punitive patrols undertaken in the Urhobo country augured well for the Government it is equally true to say that the Urhobo people meant well and that

1. Talbot had said the Urhobo were under the Oba or the Olu of Jekri (Itsekiri), P. A. Talbot—*The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. I, p. 318.

That was a lone view in contradiction of facts and the truth. The Urhobo were never under any Olu of Itsekiri. Happily, but without any disrespects to the learned author, the present-day scholars have started to discover some inaccuracies in this book. Mr. Lloyd says "...some of" his "facts, which are unsupported by citations, are inaccurate". P. C. Lloyd in *"The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria"* (Bibliography) p. 203.

I am certain his statement that the Urhobo were under the Olu was one of such inaccuracies.

2. Sir Ralph Moor's despatch No. 50 of 14. 6. 1896 to the Foreign Office. One of the proposals in the Despatch was the appointment of two men to act as forerunner of Government in penetrating into the interior and explaining Government aims.

by and large they had intended from the start to be friendly with the Government.

Gallwey, the first European ever to be seen in the remote interior of the country tells us in connection with his first visit that although he was warned, he did not take an escort (armed or unarmed) with him; that when he anchored at Eko, several Chiefs visited him in the launch. That he was conducted to the head Chief's house where he held his meeting by thousands of a cheerful crowd. The people's reply to all Gallwey had to say was that they were very pleased that the white man had come into their country. In a welcome appreciation of the visit, the people invited Gallwey and his party to watch a dance which he said he could not wait to see as it was already getting dark<sup>1</sup>.

What was perhaps a singularly warm demonstration of friendliness by the people of the Urhobo and the Ukwuani countries, was shown to Mr. Hugh Lecky, Assistant District Commissioner, Sapele, and his party on their first visit to Equaiku in 1896. The people did not only bring him presents but also organised all the children in the town to entertain him with a dance. At the meeting that followed, the people willingly signed a Treaty, as they were very pleased to see the white man. Handing over to them a copy of the Treaty with an accompanying present, the people said they were ashamed to take the present as to see the white man was enough for them; and when going away, they gave a big cheer for which in return Mr. Lecky and his party gave a general salute.

But this alone was not enough. In the afternoon, all the head women gave a goat as a present and staged a big dance of all the women in the town in honour of the visit. One very old woman believed to be the widow of a big Chief invited Lecky and his party to her house and said how pleased every one was that the Consul had come to see them at last. The Chiefs asked Lecky and party to come often and said that they would do anything they were told<sup>2</sup>. Is it not surprising that a people vilified for years as savages should act like that!

The picture was not all rosy. Some—perhaps many—Urhobo people did run away at the first sight of the white man, probably due to the strangeness of the sight, if not to anything else. But that was soon over. Mr. F. S. James bore out the point when in 1905 he said "Only a few years ago the Sobos especially, would all run away at the appearance of a white man, now it is just the opposite; ride into an inland Sobo town on a bicycle and you will have the greatest difficulty in getting out again without either damaging one of the inhabitants, yourself or the bicycle, in the crush of seething friendly

1. Gallwey's Report on the visit. *Op. cit.*

2. Sir Ralph Moor's Despatch No. 58 of 18. 7. 1896 to the Foreign Office. F. O. 2/101, pp. 180-187.



and excited mob".<sup>1</sup>

It must be noted here that beginning from the first contact up till now, not a single European whether a Consul, a trader or a missionary who had any duty or business in the Urhobo country has been in any way molested or killed.

As may perhaps be expected, the Urhobo people have some grievances against the British administration. The chief of these is what they consider an error of judgment by which for nearly 30 years Government sub-ordinated the eastern part of the Urhobo country to Chief Dore Numa, the head of the Itsekiri, whom they regarded as being only a stranger from a neighbouring tribe. They feel strongly that the strong backing of the Government gave the late Chief too free a hand in Urhobo affairs without clear and adequate safeguards. They alleged that that administrative arrangement had later led them to serious land disputes with the Itsekiri people and that it had also given rise to unfounded claims that the Itsekiri were once rulers of the Urhobo people.

Finally it seems to me a fair assessment to say that the first 22 years of British contact with the Urhobo country during which British administration was established had been a remarkable success. And having regard only to the few points of the people's dissatisfaction stated above, neither side, I am sure, regrets the bargain.

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1. Annual Report Western (Warri & Benin) Division. Southern Nigeria Government Gazette No. 2, Vol. I of 9. 5. 1905. C.O. 591/3.

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# AKORI BEADS

by

R. MAUNY

Some authors dealing with West African history and particularly those who want to prove contacts with the Mediterranean during Antiquity, speak of "mysterious beads," variously referred to as *akori* or *aggrey* beads in English, *aggriperlen* in German and *pierres d'aigris* in French. Many such writers give Egypt or Phoenicia as the country of origin.<sup>1</sup> How do modern authors use the term *akori* or *aggrey*? Any old bead seems to be so labelled: chevron beads; blue, yellow, white and black and especially those dug from the ground. In short, there is no real criterion to distinguish them.

But if we go back to the XVIth and XVIIth Century writers, we discover that the name *akori* was not given to just any bead. It was reserved for blue tubular beads, which were transparent and looked greenish when held to the light. The first reference to these is found in Duarte Pacheco Pereira (c. 1506). Speaking of the people of Mina (modern Elmina, Ghana), he says that they ask the Portuguese *inter alia* for . . . "blue beads, which they call *coris*".<sup>2</sup>

An anonymous Portuguese pilot of 1520 says that "at Mina people are very fond of azure blue stones that are not lapis-lazuli but another that is to be found in Manicongo and which the King of Portugal gets out of that country. They are pierced by little tubes. These *corili* are highly esteemed. And as they know very well that they can be imitated with coloured glass, they put them in the fire for, if they are genuine, they support this proof without being altered, the others not".<sup>3</sup>

Then Ramusio (1554) gives us more details: the inhabitants of Mina exchanged their gold with Europeans especially against glass beads (*pater nostri*) "and another kind of bead made of a blue stone, not lapis-lazuli but another mineral (*minera*) our King gets out from the Kingdom of Manicongo where grows the said stone and these beads are made in the shape of little thin tubes and they call them *corili* and, for that kind, they give a lot of gold, for they are highly esteemed by all the Negroes, who put them in the fire to see if they are not false ones, for some are made in glass, very much like them, but which do not resist the test by fire".<sup>4</sup>

Hakluyt (1589) only says a few words about them: a traveller visiting Mina c. 1556 describes the inhabitants wearing "collars,

1. Reindorf, C.C.: 1895; Delafosse, M. : 1900, p. 677 seq. and 1922 p. 28-31; Desplagnes, L. : 1907, p. 61, no2; Gautier, E.F.: 1937, p. 54; Pedrals, D.P. de : 1948, p. 53; etc.
2. Pacheco Pereira, D. : 1957, p. 120.
3. Translated from Walckenaer: 1842, I, p. 385-386.
4. Translated from Ramusio : 1554, fol. 126.

bracelets, garlands and girdles, of certain blew stones like beads".<sup>1</sup>

With the beginning of the XVIIth Century, we have an interesting reference to the place where these beads come from with Pieter de Marees, who visited the country in 1601. Speaking of Forcados River, he says: "In this river, nothing is worthy of mention but certain blue, green and black stones they make beads of and for their fine colours the other Negroes want to buy them, specially on the Gold Coast of Guinea, where they are in great esteem and reach high prices among the Negroes".<sup>2</sup>

Then Samuel Braun, from Basel, who went to the same coast in 1617, gives us precious details. Leaving Benin, his boat sails towards Rio del Rey and the rocky coast of Mount Cameroon.

"The inhabitants of this country", he says, "have nothing to exchange for European goods but a kind of little stone, they call *accarin*, they pretended to make us accept as a variety of precious stone. That stone grows in the sea, along the cliffs and reefs, like coral. If looked at at a distance, it seems shiny and sky-blue, but if examined close by, it is easy to see it is transparent and greenish. In exchange for these stones, be they precious or not, the Africans only ask for a large quantity of these little shells used as money (cowries). Transported to Guinea (Gold Coast), these blue stones are sold at high prices and are esteemed at their gold weight".<sup>3</sup>

O. Dapper (1686) tells us where these stones are exported: all along the coast from Lahou (Ivory Coast) to Accra. In his time, the country of origin was "from Rio del Rei to the river Cameroons", the Kingdom of Benin and Ardres (Allada, Dahomey): from these two last points, they must have been only re-exports. For him *acori* is a kind of "blewish coral".<sup>4</sup>

In 1732, John Barbot informs us that *agry* was cut in the shape of olives in Benin and exported from there to the Gold Coast.<sup>5</sup>

Astley (1745) gives the "sort of blue coral called by Europeans *agrie* and by the Blacks of Gold Coast *Akkerri*" as brought from Benin and "prized equal to gold" and "sold for weight".<sup>6</sup>

References later than 1750 show the end of that traffic in akori. After that, these precious beads are only to be found in the ground: this is the meaning of *contas de terra* already used by Barbot.

What can this mysterious akori be? It is not glass, for it is put into fire to test it. Is it a mineral? Geologists have never come across such blue stones, greenish by transparence, in the British Cameroons, Northern Angola (Manicongo) or elsewhere, to my knowledge. Is it a kind of coral growing on the reefs of the coast

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1. *Hakluyt*, R. : 1927, vol. 4, p. 62.

2. *Marees*, P. de : 1605, p. 90 (translated).

3. Translated from R.P. *Bouchaud* : 1947, p. 112.

4. *Dapper*, O. : 1686, p. 300.

5. *Barbot*, J. : 1732, p. 348 seq.

6. *Astley*, T. : 1745, vol. II, p. 631.

round Mount Cameroon, as suggested by Braun? I thought, along with other authors, that was the right solution when I heard of the hydrozoair called *Allopora subviolacea* W.S. Kent growing on that very coast and adjoining islands of Fernando Po and Sao Thome.<sup>1</sup> I had then seen no samples of it, for it is very rare, even in European Museums. So my deception was great when my colleague, I. Marche-Marchad, specialist of sea Invertebrates, brought me back in 1956, exemplars of *Allopora* from Sao Thome. It seems impossible to get from them the blue-greenish beads described by the authors and known to us by glass imitations.<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1.) For *Allopora* is frankly violet, "lie-de-vin", reddish and not bluish.

What is akori then? The problem remains to be solved. I have written to a specialist of hydrozoairs, Professor H. Boschma, of Leiden, and sent him all my information and samples of blue tubular beads, greenish by transparence, the existence of which proves to us that such copies are still asked for to-day. He knows no hydrozoair able to give such beads. Is there on this coast between Rio del Rey and Loanda a very rare blue hydrozoair or other marine being still unknown to naturalists? Or already extinct?

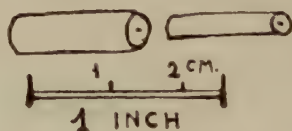


Fig. 1.

Was S. Braun misinformed when he asked where *accarin* came from? It is possible. But what then of the converging information of Pereira, the Pilot, Ramusio, de Marees, Dapper and others, all speaking of blue beads that did not melt with fire and that came from the region east of the mouth of the Niger? Even if some have been inspired by their predecessors, too many have spoken of these blue beads to think they have not existed.

This enigma has to be solved and this is the reason why I publish this paper in a Nigerian Review, for I think it is chiefly in Nigeria that fresh light can be thrown on the problem.

Could readers of this journal give information on the following points:

Are sky blue beads, greenish by transparence, known in their region? If so, what is their name in the vernacular language and are they all of glass?

1. Mauny, R. : 1949, p. 33-36

2. I have collected such beads in Bamako, Saint-Louis, Ibadan, and one has even been found during the excavations of Koumbi Saleh, capital of the Empire of Ghana. See also K. Krieger, 1943, Taf. 1, No. 4.



Are some of them regarded as much more precious than others and made of a different material that does not melt in the fire (e.g. stone, coral, etc.)? If so, how can the difference between these and the glass beads be checked?

From whence are these precious "stones" believed to come; are they dug out of the ground, gathered on rocks, or on reefs, and are there legends about their origin?

Are blue tubular beads devoted to one god or one cult? (I saw a collar of such beads on the neck of a priest of Shango in Ibadan).

Are they reserved for chiefs, priests or members of certain societies?

Is there a kind of bead or mineral or coral, etc. called *akori* (or some similar name) known on the coast of Mount Cameroon?

If so, what is it and in what language does this name occur?

Is it rare and highly valued and what is its price?

Are there such beads in Benin, Ife, Ashanti or other king's regalia? Or in public collections (British, German, Nigerian, Portuguese) especially those coming from Benin, Ife, Yoruba country and even Ghana (Ashanti, etc.)? Are they made of glass or not?

I hope when all this information is gathered, that it will be possible to solve one of the most irritating problems that West African archaeologists and historians have to deal with.

(Would readers who are able to furnish any information on the lines outlined above, kindly write either to the Hon. Literary Editor of this Journal at University College, Ibadan or to the author, M. R. Mauny, at the Institut Francais d'Afrique Noire, Dakar. Editor.)

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*A Review of the Exploration and Commercial History of the River Benue, with special reference to the Administration of the Royal Niger Company.*

by

A. H. M. KIRK-GREENE

ALTHOUGH European traders had been in touch with the Bight of Benin since the end of the XV century, there appears to have been no determined attempt to penetrate beyond the Guinea littoral. It seems probable that even the coastal peoples themselves were ignorant of the extent and make-up of the tribes and terrain of the hinterland. Traders and natives alike were, of course, aware that beyond the fringe of mangrove swamps there were highly organized states, and rumours doubtless circulated of a mighty river, draining perhaps into a great inland sea. But there was little incentive to exploration: if slaves and other cargo were readily available along the coast, what profit lay in exposing oneself further to the horrors and hazards that contributed to Guinea's evil reputation?

Nor should the local reaction to the exploitation of the interior be overlooked. The African showed a natural reluctance to admit invaders. "Merchants", Okukeno, Chief of the Egba, told Sir Richard Burton, "come to get what they can; they come for nothing but cowries; they trade with a man and his enemy—in fact, they are liars and rascals".<sup>1</sup> Again: "As so much and so vital a part of the slave-trade was in the hands of white men, the coastal tribes and Arab traders did not at first suspect travellers of the intention of helping to abolish their trade, but they did suspect them of planning to take away their livelihood. They could not conceive that there could be any other reason for wishing to penetrate inland, and when travellers told them that they sought knowledge not slaves, . . . they thought it was but another example of the white man's cunning, and their hostility increased".<sup>2</sup> A glance at the naval despatches from the middle of last century provides ample evidence of the determined resistance put up by the riverain tribes. "As long as the trader remained in his ship or hulk he was welcomed, but it was a very

1. R.F. Burton. *Abeokuta and the Cameroons Mountains*. 1863. In this connection I should like to refer to Miss C. Gertzel's paper presented to the Second Conference on African History and Archaeology in July, 1957 where she expressed the view that "...it is difficult to discover the attitude of the African inhabitants of those regions to the traders themselves, to the methods of trade, outside the at-present-accepted generalisations taken from travellers' books". She went on to emphasise the importance of the co-operation of an anthropologist in such historical studies as advocated by G.I. Jones in his review of K.O. Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, in *Africa*, January, 1957.
2. C. Howard and J.H. Plumb, *West African Explorers*, O.U.P., 1951. Introduction, p. 9.



different matter when he indicated that he wished to by-pass the numerous middlemen of the Coast and deal direct with the inland producer. Such a change meant brokerage ruin to many a prosperous chief, who was therefore prepared, by every means in his power from intimidation to murder, to obstruct any effort made to open trading stations in the interior".<sup>1</sup> A further element in this opposition to penetration inland was, as Professor Dike has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> the African attitude to the occupancy of land, and he quotes from an authority on Nigerian land law<sup>3</sup> to show that the chiefs were in duty bound to oppose any encroachment.

It may strike us today as strange that, although merchants from Europe had for over 300 years traded along the myriad, labyrinthine creeks between Forcados and Bonny, it had never occurred to anyone, mindful of the great deltas of the Indus, the Nile and the Yangtze-Kiang, that these swamps and tongues of water might indeed be the delta of another great river. Mungo Park, the fourth emissary of the zealous African Association, had set eyes on the Niger in 1796 and had settled the problem of its direction of flow, but his death on his second expedition and the advent of the Napoleonic wars combined to prevent any further exploration till the 1820's. It remained for Richard Lander to succeed where others had failed.

But the knowledge that the Oil Rivers, as they later became known, were all mouths of the Niger which flowed uninterruptedly into the cartographer's "Aethiopic Gulph", was not the only important result of the Landers' remarkable voyage. They also brought back news of the existence of another majestic river: the Benue, Mother of Waters.

The instructions given to Richard Lander from Downing Street had hinted that the Niger might run into a confluence or lake rather than drain into the sea at Funda, where Clapperton had been told the mouth of the river was to be found—"If you should find that at Funda the Quorra continues to flow to the southward, you are to follow it to the sea, where, in this case, it may be presumed to empty its waters; but if it should be found to turn off to the eastward, in which case it will most probably fall into the Lake Tshad, you are to follow its course in that direction, as far as you conceive you can venture to do so, with due regard to your personal safety, even to Bornou. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

1. Ellen Thorp, *Ladder of Bones*, London, 1956, p. 204.
2. K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*. Clarendon Press, 1956. p. 6.
3. T.O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law and Custom*, London, 1950. ch. V.
4. Instructions from Downing Street contained in R & J. Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, London, 1832. Vol. I, pp.liv-lv.

Thus it was that Lander on that memorable 25th October, 1830 was uncertain what to make of this phenomenon. "At five o'clock this morning, we found ourselves nearly opposite a very considerable river, entering the Niger from the eastward; it appeared to be three or four miles wide at its mouth, and on the bank we saw a large town, one part of which faced the river and the other the Quorra. We at first supposed it to be an arm of that river, and running from us; and therefore directed our course for it. We proceeded up it a short distance, but finding the current against us, and that it increased as we got within its entrance, and our people being tired, we were compelled to give up the attempt . . . ."<sup>1</sup>

They had time to remark that both banks were high and appeared fertile, and they concluded that the town was "Cuttumcurrafee". Later they were told that this river was "the celebrated Shar, Shary, or Sharry, of travellers, or, which is more correct than either, the Tshadda as it is universally called throughout the country."

The opportunities for trade revealed by the Landers' discovery of the Niger and the Benue at once attracted the minds of the mercantile firms in England. The emphasis switched from exploration to exploitation. Throughout the history of Africa, its "great rivers, despite their limitations, have always been the most convenient highways of imperialism, since they provided the easiest approach to the rich hinterland".<sup>2</sup> Commentators have pointed out how, curiously enough, the discovery of the twin waterways of modern Nigeria coincided with the perfection of the steam engine: without the replacement of sailing vessels by steam launches, more commercial development would have been out of the question. "Access to the interior of Africa", writes the biographer of Goldie, "was not known to Europe till steam was ready to exploit it".<sup>3</sup>

The first attempt to put the discovery of the Landers to practical use was made in 1832, as a trading speculation, by the Liverpool merchant and West Coast pioneer, Macgregor Laird. The venture was quite unofficial, although Government sought permission to attach a naval officer to survey the river. The aim of the object is succinctly summed up in the typically 19th century dedication of its subsequent chronicle: "To the merchants and philanthropists of Great Britain, in the hope that the attempt recorded in these Volumes, to establish a Commercial Intercourse with Central Africa via the River Niger, may open new fields of enterprise to the Mercantile world, and of usefulness to those who labour for the amelioration of

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1. R & J. Lander, op. cit. Vol. III. p. 69.

2. A.N. Cook, *British Enterprise in Nigeria*, Philadelphia. 1943, p. 79.

3. D. Wellesley, *Sir George Goldie*, London, 1934, p. 10.

uncivilized man . . . ”<sup>1</sup>

In 1832, and again in the following year, this expedition penetrated a short way up the Benue, as far as Dagboh, 104 miles above the confluence. Macgregor Laird had decided to branch off from the Niger when he received news that the King of Fundah was anxious to meet his first European. They camped at “Yimmahah, beautifully situated on the top of a nearly perpendicular rock”, and from there they made their way across to Fundah. The king welcomed them and announced that he had an abundance of ivory; later, however, when some of his people tried privily to sell ivory to the visitors, the king had them flogged. Assurances were given that the Shary—Oldfield preferred the name Tchadda—flowed from Lake Chad and was navigable for another twelve days upstream of Fundah. Macgregor Laird remarked that the water of the Benue was much colder than that of the Niger, adding the remarkably accurate surmise that it rose in “. . . the same range of hills that gives birth to the Cameroons, . . . on its opposite declivity”.<sup>2</sup> On account of its sudden rise and fall he dismissed the theory that the river was the overflow of an inland sea. Commercially the expedition was a complete failure. Macgregor Laird himself never returned to Africa, but his interest remained undiminished.

The disastrous 1841 Niger expedition<sup>3</sup> put a halt to further commercial schemes, and even the philanthropists drew in their horns. For the next ten years the Benue flowed on, its waters undisturbed and unobserved by alien seekers after truth.

In 1850 an expedition left Tripoli to cross the desert and approach the headwaters of the Benue from the north. This party was sponsored and supplied by the British Government—the trading community and the humanitarians were still licking their wounds, growling suspiciously at the mere mention of the Niger or Tshadda rivers—and was under the leadership of James Richardson, supported by Heinrich Barth and Adolf Overweg. Though this may be claimed as the greatest Nigerian expedition of the century, it is only of the Benue events that I can treat here.

While Overweg headed for Lake Chad, to explore it with his collapsible boat, Barth set out from Kukawa to Adamawa, the Fulani kingdom of Fumbina which no European had as yet penetrated. From a previous visit to Lake Chad, Barth had been able to dismiss the theory that the Benue drained into the lake. “It seems to have been merely from prejudice that people in Europe have come to the conclusion that this Central African basin must either have an outlet, or must be salt. For I can positively assert that it has no outlet, and

1. Macgregor Laird and R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, London, 1837, p. iii.

2. Macgregor Laird, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

3. There is a wealth of narrative and polemic on this expedition. The best is perhaps Capt. W. Allen and T.R.H. Thomson, *A Narrative of the Expedition to the Niger River in 1841*, London 1848: see also Parliamentary Papers, 1843, XLVIII.



that its water is perfectly fresh".<sup>1</sup> In the despatch that he wrote on 24th May, 1851, before leaving Bornu, Barth set out in some detail his views on the mysterious course of this river:- "I am to start for Adamawa, . . . whose capital, Yola, is distant from here fifteen days SSW, situated on a very considerable river called Faro, which, joining another river not less considerable, and likewise navigable, called Benuwe, falls into the Kwara, or Niger, at a place between Kakanda and Adda, not more than a few days distant from the mouth of that celebrated river . . . and to reach Bornu by a southern road, which it was presumed might be effected partly or entirely by water, etc. As for my part, I can at present certify, with the greatest confidence, that there is no connection whatever between those two rivers, the Chadda, which is identical with the Benuwe, on the one, and the Shary, the principal tributary of Lake Tsad, on the other side."<sup>2</sup>

Thus it was that during the journey south Barth's mind was preoccupied with the thought of setting eyes on this main arm of the Kwara. On June 18th he was amply rewarded, for his guides brought him to Tepe, where the Faro flows, with a fine sweep from the east, into the Benue and offers an unusually impressive beauty. The appearance of the river exceeded his liveliest expectations: "I looked long and silently upon the stream; it was one of the happiest moments in my life".<sup>3</sup> His graceful lithograph bears testimony to this claim.

So it came about that Barth succeeded in his ambition of throwing light upon the hydrographical arteries of Central Africa and in gaining confirmation of his own theory as to the identity and direction of the great river of Adamawa.

On receiving the news that Barth had discovered the Benue, the British Government resolved to send out a single vessel, partly "to meet and afford assistance to that excellent traveller Dr. Barth"<sup>4</sup> and partly to explore this new geographical problem above Dagboh and establish that the "Benueh" was indeed the Chadda that Lander had noted.

Macgregor Laird's enthusiasm and personal experience of Niger affairs secured him the Admiralty contract, and he fitted out with peculiar care the specially designed *Pleiad*, 260 tons and costing £5,000.

On July 12th, the *Pleiad*, commanded by Dr. Baikie, R.N., crossed the Nun bar at the mouth of the Niger, and on August 7th she entered the Benue. Baikie remarks on the local belief that there is a difference of colour between the two rivers and quotes the Hausa names for the 'white water' of the Niger and the 'black water' of the

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1. H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, London, 1857. Vol. ii. p.325.
  2. H. Barth, op. cit., p.348.
  3. H. Barth, op. cit., p.467.
  4. Admiralty Instructions to Beecroft, dated 23rd May, 1854.

Benue. After they had ascended as far as the territory of Hammaruwa, over two hundred miles above Dagbo, Baikie was so anxious lest the river fall (it was now the end of September) that he decided to leave the *Pleiad* at Gurowa, the port of Muri sultanate, and row on to Yola in the gig. He was led to believe that Yola was quite close, and as he had so far been unable to obtain any reliable news of Barth, other than vague reports from Hausa traders, he calculated that his best chance lay in making enquiries at the Sultan of Adamawa's court. Accompanied only by the second master, the gig reached Dulti, but there the attitude of the surprised tribes was so hostile that Baikie, realising that they could never row as far as Yola against the strong current, turned about. To his intense disappointment, there was no sign of the *Pleiad* at its original anchorage. There was nothing to be done but to row on, "silently, and with somewhat heavy hearts". The Krumen covered eighty miles in the first day. The next morning one of them suddenly cried "Dere de ship", as they swept alongside the *Pleiad*, aground on a sandbank. They learned that the chief mate had ordered the ship to drop down with the stream fearing that the river was about to fall. Though Baikie had been unable to link up with Barth or Vogel, he had succeeded in the second object of his mission by establishing the identity of the Benue and the Chadda.<sup>1</sup>

Macgregor Laird had kept his enthusiasm and his faith in the commercial possibilities of the Niger and Benue river system; the success of Baikie's expedition, in no small part due to his own planning, determined him to press his theories about the development of the trade potential on the rivers among his influential friends, both political and mercantile. The reaction, if that is not too energetic a word, was at first apathetic: Government, whose 1841 expedition wound was still raw, were far too concerned with the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny to pay much attention to what they considered a "chimerical enterprise" in West Africa. But Macgregor Laird was indefatigable and he set out his views at length. Here is one example:-

"The result of the late ascent of the Chadda has been so successful . . that I trust Her Majesty's Government will persevere in following up the geographical discoveries so ably commenced by Dr. Baikie; and though the expense and risk has (sic) proved too great for me, individually, to again offer my services on the same terms as contractor, the interest I take in the subject may excuse my now addressing your Lordship".<sup>2</sup>

We must leave aside the fortunes of Laird's Niger subsidy<sup>3</sup> but once again, his economic theories are of interest when we look at

1. W.B. Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Benue*, London. 1856.

2. Letter to the Earl of Clarendon dated 5th March, 1855.

3. For a summary see A.F. Mockler-Ferryman, *British Nigeria*, London. 1902 ch. V.

the expansion on the Benue in the following three decades. He was convinced that the only way to develop trade was to establish permanent, well-stocked factories on shore, replenished by steamers which would have direct access to the sea. He attached great importance to the regular journey of a steamer, arguing that not only would such a measure provide a reliable service for importing trade goods and evacuating produce, but it would also prevent the Delta tribes from stopping the passage of peoples above them and thereby enable the latter to enjoy uninterrupted intercourse with the trading vessels at the river's mouth.

The British Government now considered that they had fulfilled their role in the establishment of trade on the Niger, largely incidental to their main object of seeking to stamp out slavery, and therefore recalled Baikie from his appointment as Consular Agent at the confluence. The Lokoja Consulate<sup>1</sup> was not finally closed till 1869, but it had already become clear that Government's interest in trade in this region, doubtless prompted by the famous recommendation of the 1865 Parliamentary Select Committee<sup>2</sup>, had waned. Control of the upper reaches of the rivers now began to pass into the hands of the merchants, with whom, for all intents and purposes, it remained till the Crown again assumed the responsibility of administration in 1900. A new era had opened.

Even as the British Government was withdrawing from the Niger and Benue, a group of merchants in England were actively seeking to follow up the work of Macgregor Laird and re-establish commercial intercourse with the peoples of that region.

In his 1858 prospectus for a new joint stock company, to be called the Central African Company, Laird had advanced the thesis that given adequate capital to tide a riverain enterprise over its first few years, financial success was inevitable.

The sterile "River Niger Navigation and Trading Company" was followed in July 1863 by the more important "Company of African Merchants",<sup>3</sup> whose director was A. Hamilton, the executor of Macgregor Laird's estate.

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1. State Papers, lviii, pp.932-940 and lx, p.603 refer.

2. Parliamentary Papers 1865, V. (412).

K.O. Dike denies the relevance of this resolution to the Niger and argues that "...the British Government and her traders launched a vigorous policy of expansion during the sixties." See chapter IX of his *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, passim. In my opinion, however, his thesis is open to question: while the traders were undeniably active, Government was far from acquisitive, and was confined to safeguarding existing navigation rights, a policy of static protection rather than active expansion. The weight of evidence seems to me support Mockler-Ferryman's statement (passim, footnote p.64) that from the closing of the Lokoja consulate in 1868 until the declaration of the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1884 the British Government did not attempt to exercise any political influence on what is now Nigeria.

3. Parliamentary Papers, 1864, XLI.



Despite Lord John Russell's patronage, this Company never started trading. By 1865, however, the older Coast traders were demonstrably, if desultorily, pushing their interests up-river and were adopting the novel practice of leaving their ships in the river until they had exchanged all their merchandise for produce. Inevitably, in the absence of a co-ordinated policy, the system began to work against itself, and for the next decade the riverain history is marked by a period of commercial stagnation and moral degredation.

Regular trade on the Benue may be said to have begun in 1874, when the West African Company, with its three steamers, purchased ivory at Bomasha, up-stream of Loko. This Manchester firm had first started 9 years earlier at Lokoja, in the charge of the colourful and celebrated Lagos trader W. McCoskry<sup>1</sup>. Opposition was encountered from the King of Gbegbe, who objected to the Lagos and Sierra Leone immigrants at Lokoja penetrating the Benue river, and the West African Company was obliged to bombard the town from its trading steamers in October. In 1876 the Central African Company commenced trading operations on the Benue; in the same year the well-known Alexander Miller Brothers, of Glasgow, appeared on the Benue scene with three steamers, a launch and a hulk, under the supervision of J. A. Croft.

In May 1879, however, a set-back caused the three European firms to withdraw from the Benue. The agent of the West African Company at Bomasha was murdered by the Mitshi (today we prefer the name Tiv.), who plundered and burned the warehouses. The firms took stock of their position, came to the conclusion that they were doing little more than cutting each other's throats, and agreed to amalgamate. With the fourth big European enterprise in the area, James Pinnock of Liverpool, they formed, in 1879, the United Africa Company.

To those with but the meagrest experience of the hazards of promoting a federation, let alone one bedevilled by commercial jealousies, it is self-evident that such a union could never have been effected without the drive of a strong leader: this moving spirit was Goldie Taubman. In 1877 he thought he would combine his enthusiasm for geographical exploration with his interest in the unhealthy finances of the Central African Company, in which his family had considerable investments. He planned to ascend the Benue and then march across the central African continent, anticipating by a generation the travels of Boyd<sup>2</sup> Alexander and the Duke of Mecklenburg. <sup>3</sup>A steam launch, the *Benue*, was built for him at Yarrow, and with his brother, a captain in the 63rd Regiment, he set out for the West Coast. But George Goldie's brother became so ill

1. E. Thorpe, op. cit., has some valuable information on McCoskry. In Lagos he is remembered by the Yoruba name Apongbon.
2. Boyd Alexander, *From the Niger to the Nile*, London 1907.
3. Duke of Mecklenburg, *From the Congo to the Niger and the Nile*, 1913.

with fever in Nupeland that the trans-African project had to be cancelled.

Both men returned to England, but not before Goldie had seen enough to realise the value of the area. "On the journey back I conceived the ambition of adding the region of the Niger to the British Empire"<sup>1</sup>. Within the past seven years the value of exports from the Niger valley and the lower Benue had leaped from £55,000 to, according to Consul Hopkins' estimates, over £300,000. Consul Hopkins is worth quoting again: "It is almost impossible to describe the constant bickerings between these rival factories. . In one instance, as many as five companies established trading posts in one town on the Niger".<sup>2</sup> Law and order were unknown; unity was essential to self-preservation. Goldie was determined to eradicate the lemming-like progress to bankruptcy. As he said to his shareholders many years later:<sup>3</sup> "In an unsettled country, where the foundations for the security of native life, liberty, and property are being laid by the efforts of a small number of British subjects, scattered amongst dense populations of turbulent savages, and where the conditions of progress are hampered by climatic and physical difficulties, it is of the utmost importance that these efforts should be united, instead of being wasted in internal jealousies and struggles, which not only retard the progress of civilization, but must ultimately destroy what has already been effected. I am not ashamed to confess my personal responsibility for the conception and execution of this policy of united effort".

The formation of Goldie's United Africa Company brought about an immediate raising in the tone of affairs. Undaunted by the Munshi outrage of the previous year, the company returned to the Benue and opened a factory at Loko. Elsewhere, too, trading stations were erected on shore and trade was started in earnest under the vigorous administration of David Macintosh as agent-general on the Coast. At home, the board of directors under Lord Aberdare, whose position (other qualities apart) as an ex-Cabinet Minister lent respectability to the venture, was made up of other experienced members of the amalgamated Delta firms. Goldie held the position of Political Administrator.

The French, now entrenched on the upper Niger—once imaginatively described as "le trait d'union de nos Indes noires"—began to turn envious eyes to the rich delta land. In 1881 a trading house was opened by a former Zouave officer, the Count of Semelle, under the anxious aegis of Gambetta himself. This was the *Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Equatoriale*, which had a capital of £160,000. Five stations were established on the Niger and one on the Benue, at Loko. There is reason to suspect that Gambetta's patronage

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1. Quoted by D. Wellesley, op. cit., p. 93.

2. Quoted by K. O. Dike, op. cit., p. 209.

3. Annual General Meeting of the Royal Niger Company Limited.

took the shape of state subventions: this was the beginning of the era of French dreams of "une reunion sur les rives du Tchad de nos possessions de L'Algerie, Tunisie, de Soudan et du Congo francais".

Goldie was not blind to the danger. As early as 1881 he had applied to the British Government for a charter. Its prospectus stated that the company sought to establish direct relations with the Sokoto and Gwandu empires, and to start operations farther up the Benue so as to enter into commercial competition with the states of the Chad basin. Goldie now reorganised the capital structure of the United Africa Company. In July 1882 he launched the National African Company, with the formidable capital of one million pounds. By making the issue of these shares open to the public, Goldie hoped to be able to buy his out foreign competitors, whose presence on the rivers remained an insuperable obstacle to his ambition of the grant of a chartered monopoly.

Gambetta, however, was not likely to relinquish his imperial dream without a fight. Aware that the strengthened, reborn National African Company was now in a position to buy out its Paris opposite number, Gambetta revived the Marseilles company of Verminak and in 1882 introduced it on the lower Niger under the name of *Compagnie du Senegal et de la Cote Occidentale d'Afrique*, backed by a capital of £600,000. Goldie, who had already completed the negotiations for the buying-out of the first French firm, was met with a refusal when he went over to Paris with the deeds: "...as the Paris people pointed out, they would be sacrificing their flag to no purpose, seeing that another French Society was in the field"<sup>1</sup>.

In contrast to the deliberate dearth of memoirs by the servants of the National African Company—a point that I shall return to later—there exist two valuable chronicles<sup>2</sup> by Commandant Mattei, French consul at Brass and later the agent-general of the *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Equatoriale*. When this gentleman returned to the Coast in June, 1882, he had been authorised to establish "factories volentes" wherever the United Africa Company was operating. By 1883 the French commercial fleet had grown to six vessels, with a gross tonnage of 568 tons. Whereas in 1878 the four British firms had been able to monopolise the Niger and Benue trade with their steamers and a score of trading posts, now the French firms had so expanded that they boasted over 31 commercial stations. The French press carried a report of the plans to explore the Benue, heralded as "le chemin du Soudan". It was claimed that at least 50,000 kgs. of ivory were exported annually from the Benue regions, a figure that could be multiplied several times once proper commerce

1. Quoted by D. Wellesley, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

2. A. Mattei, *Rapports sur le Niger et Benue*, 1873; and *Bas Niger, Benoué, Dahomey*, Grenoble, 1890.



was established. There was a rumoured amethyst mine at Dansofa, and gold was said to be abundant in the Laboul mountains of Adamawa. Mattei now ascended the Benue in the *Nupe*, loaded with trade goods, and opened French stations at Ibi and Zhibu. These towns, nearly 300 miles above the confluence, were on the ivory caravan route from Adamawa across to the British factory at Egga on the Niger.

Another foreign thorn in the National African Company flesh, potentially of equal hurt though in the event not so harmful, was the persistence of Eduard Flegel in his efforts to gain a treaty from the Emir of Yola that would allow him to exploit the legendary mineral riches of Adamawa. A clerk in a German trading house at Lagos, he had in 1879 secured a passage on board the C.M.S. vessel *Henry Venn* and penetrated as far up the Benue as Garua. Again in 1882 and 1883 Flegel<sup>1</sup> travelled extensively in Adamawa and was twice admitted to the presence of the Emir of Yola, who allowed him to settle in his capital. This so alarmed the National African Company that they sent William Wallace up to Yola from Ibi to secure a lease of ground there. The death-blow—almost literally, for worn out by his tremendous exertions, he died soon after—to Flegel's aspirations came when Goldie forestalled him in acquiring the treaty with Sokoto: Flegel, on his way north with blank treaty-forms<sup>2</sup> in his pocket met the returning and successful Joseph Thomson. The incident reminds us of Lugard and Decoeur in the "Nikki Handicap" a decade later, or of Amundsen and Scott.

The bitter struggle between the National African Company and the French firms continued for another fifteen months. In a desperate thrust to ruin the economy of his rivals, Goldie ordered his factories to undersell the French by slashing their prices 25%. The French companies began to totter; the death of their patron, Gambetta, under-mined them further; and the final blow came with the fall of imperialism from popular French favour. "The only stroke of fortune", noted Goldie, "that we have had throughout was the reaction in France in 1884 against colonial enterprises, in consequence of those disasters in Tonking, to which M. Jules Ferry, the great Colonial Minister, owed his downfall and the nickname of *Le Tonkinois!*".<sup>3</sup> The French were compelled to ask that the 1882 negotiations be resumed. By October, 1884, Goldie had bought out both French companies in exchange for a cash payment and a number of shares in the National African Company. The remaining British competitor, the Liverpool and Manchester Trading Company, was also swallowed up. The Germans provided no

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1. See, for example, his *Vom Niger-Benue*, 1890.

2. The treaty is reproduced as Appendix G to Sir Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria*, London, 1929.

3. Quoted by D. Wellesley, *op. cit.*, p.21.

opposition on the Benue—unlike the calamitous Hoenigsberg affair of the Niger—though their claim to the region by virtue of Heinrich Barth's nationality is an interesting echo of some hushed-up personal bitterness of 30 years earlier.

Britain had cause to thank the unremitting efforts of Goldie, who had "conferred unity and cohesion on British activity in the Niger valley at a critical period in West African history, when the rivalry among the great powers was about to engulf the entire continent in the aggressive politics and expanding economy of western Europe".<sup>1</sup> At the Berlin Conference she was able to make the all-important declaration "essential to their case in pressing for the exclusion of the Niger from international control", that a British firm was in adequate possession of the Benue and Lower Niger.<sup>2</sup> But it had been a close thing: not till November 1st was Goldie in a position to confirm the negotiations for buying out the French companies, while Consul Hewett's final treaty was not signed till November 14th, the day before the Conference opened! Britain had barely managed to avoid a repetition of that dark day of 14th July, 1884 when Gustav Nachtigal had raised in her face the German flag over the protectorate of the Cameroons.

The Charter<sup>3</sup> was granted to the National African Company on 10th July 1886; three days later the Company changed its name to the Royal Niger Company, Chartered and Limited. The ramifications, delays, intrigues, ruses, and vicissitudes of its birth and life and death do not directly concern us here; nor does the argument of Adam Smith's thesis in his *Wealth of Nations* that "the government of an exclusive company of merchants is perhaps the worst of all forms of government"<sup>4</sup>. We will therefore pass from the history of Benue exploration to a review of the Royal Niger Company's internal organisation in the area that was soon to be christened—by no less distinguished a godparent than Flora Shaw, later Lady Lugard, as I have suggested in another paper<sup>5</sup>—Nigeria, and of the Company's expansion on the Benue.

At this point I should like to interpolate a note on Royal Niger Company historical sources. It is no accident that, although the Company was born over 70 years ago and died nearly 60 years ago, no historical analysis, let alone a straightforward chronicle of events, has yet been published. Even the sole memoir of Goldie cannot measure up to anything like a definite biography. In this respect,

1. K. O. Dike, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
2. An excellent study is S. E. Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*, London, 1942.
3. The Charter is reproduced in toto in A. F. Mockler-Ferryman, *Up the Niger*, London, 1892, Appendix III.
4. Adam Smith. *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776, ii, p. 302.
5. A.H.M. Kirke-Greene, *Who coined the Name 'Nigeria'?*, *West Africa* December 22nd, 1956.

Charles Wilson's "*The History of Unilever*" (1954) seemed to me disappointing by reason of its failure to seize a unique opportunity. A few words then, on the question of material for a history of the Royal Niger Company.

First, we must understand why it is that, while the heavyweights of the early days of Northern Nigerian Protectorate have bequeathed us most valuable records, none of the Royal Niger Company officers has ever published his memoirs. Lugard's *Dual Mandate* and his about-to-appear diaries; histories by Orr and Temple, sketches by Goldsmith and Burdon, all his lieutenants; memoirs by Geary of the Legal Department, by Vischer of the Education Department, by Crozier of the R.W.A.F.F., by Falconer of the Survey Department, by Robinson and Miller and Kun of the Missions, by Kisch and Hastings and Haig and Hermon-Hodge of the Administration—the era is amply covered. But on the Royal Niger Company's exploits silence has reigned. Why? A glance at the Debates in the House of Commons gives an immediate reply<sup>1</sup>: every employee was obliged to swear, in a £1,000 bond, that he would never disclose to anyone any facts about the Company, neither would he publish any such information.

Secondly Goldie himself. Bitterly faithful to what he himself once described as his "Chinese policy of silence", he burnt all his papers, shortly after the outbreak of the 1914 war. His biographer writes: "No one knew better than he that he was destroying the records of an institution which in its brief existence of thirteen years played a decisive part in African history. . . . he swept all record of them out of reach"<sup>2</sup>. A recurrent, if not dominant, theme of Dorothy Wellesley's monograph of Goldie's self-effacingness after 1900. His secrecy still haunts the Company's heirs, for at Unilever House today, despite the willing help rendered by their Information Officers, there is available but a tithe of the records one could have expected.

Thirdly, historians have, in consequence, been driven to secondary sources. None of these accounts is reported entirely through impartial eyes: either they lean, like Flora Shaw as the Colonial editor of *The Times*, towards Goldie; or, like Labouchere and the Liverpool merchants, they rant violently against the Company; or, as is to be expected in the foreign press of the Scramble era, they obscure an objective assessment by their patriotism.

Fourthly, the position has brightened considerably in the past few years. In 1952 the Foreign Office papers were opened up to the year 1902. It was not long before scholars seized on this untouched material. Members of this Society may remember reading, in one of the issues of the *Bulletin* under *Notes of Research in Progress*,

1. For example, *Hansard*, 1893, Sept. 7,521; 1896, May 4,429; 1898, May 23, 401.
2. Quoted by D. Wellesley, *op. cit.*, p. 86.



that a research student of King's College, London was writing a thesis on "British Policy and Chartered Company Administration in Nigeria, 1879-1900". For this thesis Mr. Flint received his doctorate a few months ago; I was privileged to read the MS, which seemed to me to offer the scholarly account of the Royal Niger Company that we have all been waiting for.

The next section of my paper deals with the administration of the Royal Niger Company. In the context of my sub-title, "administration" means the organisational structure of the Company on the rivers, which is something that I have not so far found analysed in print. Only secondary is "administration" in its other sense, that of the Company's actual government in the upper Benue. This is based on F. O. documents and on my own research. I am immodest enough to feel that this could be of particular interest here, where such records are not immediately available. It is factual, not critical; it relates but does not seek to revolutionize; it reveals but does not yet revise. Professor Dike, on the final page of his brilliant dissertation on trade in the Niger Delta,<sup>1</sup> made our mouths water by his promised dish on the menu: "The events of this crucial period," (1885-1900) "of which this study is merely an introduction, will form the subject of another work". Dr. Flint has tantalized me even more by so generously allowing me a taste of his *plat du jour*, which is still in the kitchen. If this paper has no other merit than that of so whetting your appetite and so tickling your palate that you bang impatiently on the table with your knife and fork to demand a full, five-course meal of the Royal Niger Company's history, then it will not have been written in vain.

The Charter was dated July 10th, 1886. Precisely four days later the Company issued its first Regulation, "providing for Provisional Rules to follow, in the Administration of Justice in the Niger Territories". These were grouped under six categories: A dealt with foreigners and natives; B with the registration of foreigners; C with the administration of justice to natives, and D with it to foreigners; E with the competence of courts; and F with general judicial provisions.

To this document are attached 13 Regulations, which are of the highest consequence to an understanding of the Royal Niger Company's set-up. Of these, I have here selected for comment the most important, amplifying them with facts culled from other sources.

Before, however, we broach the Regulations, let us quickly arrange in our minds the headquarters set-up, both in London and on the Coast. The National African Company's Board of Directors gave way to a Council, as demanded by Charter, and the directors were now known as members of the Council. Similarly, the

1. K. O. Dike, *op. cit.*

2. See in particular papers in F. O. 84/1793.

the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were restyled Governor and Deputy Governor, while provision was made for the inclusion of the French houses by the appointment of two of their directors as Advisors to the Council. In Nigeria, the head of the executive, formerly known as the chief trading agent, became the Agent-General, and new appointments were made in the form of a Commandant of Constabulary and a Senior Judicial Officer. The depot station for the Coast was established at Akassa while the headquarters were generously laid out in 40 acres at Asaba.

Regulation no. 2 is a proclamation calling on all persons in the Niger Territories to conform to the regulations. It also establishes customs duties, and a clearing house at Akassa, at which port all vessels were ordered to call.

Regulation no. 3 appoints a supreme Judicial Officer. The ten articles of this regulation lay down his powers in such matters as appeals from the executive staff, the issue of warrants to such officers and its corollary of the power of suspension of their judicial powers. His orders would remain valid until the Council, in London, made their pleasure known.

Regulation no. 4 deals with the Agent-General and lists his powers vis-a-vis the executive, constabulary and judiciary. He, too, was empowered to appoint and suspend subsidiary executive staff, again provided that such actions were forthwith reported to the Council for ratification. The Agent-General could appoint an executive officer to act temporarily as a Constabulary Officer if there was no substantive gazetted officer available.

Regulation no. 5 lists the Senior Executive Officers, in order of the seniority in which they might act for the Agent-General. An important provision attaches to this question of 'acting'. The regulation defined "absent" as being either physically away from the Niger Territories, or else, by other causes, unable to reach any particular area where the decision of a Senior Executive Officer was desirable. Thus it was constitutionally possible for two or more Senior Executive Officers to be acting simultaneously as Agent-General—and the Agent-General to be in the country at the same time! This was, of course, a useful provision given the difficulties and delays of communications, but politically and financially such an arrangement might lead to deep entanglements.

Regulation no. 6 is a specimen warrant for the appointment of a District Agent. These officers were the backbone of the Company's local administration. Many of them made a name for themselves in Nigerian history.

Now let us examine in more detail how these regulations were put into force.

First the trading regulations. The duties raised on imports at Akassa included 2/- a gallon on spirits, 6d. a lb. on a tobacco, 1/- cwt. on salt, and 100% *ad valorem* on war materials. If fraud was suspected, the agents were entitled to purchase the goods at the value

declared on the invoice plus 2% for good measure! Exports were also taxed: 2d. cwt. on palm kernels, 1d. gallon on palm oil, 1/- lb. on ivory. The regulations allowed a fine of £500 or a sum not exceeding 5 times the amount lost to revenue; in addition, both the merchandize and the vessel were liable to confiscation. Use of this power was made in the celebrated case of the *Sergeant Malamine*. Licences were introduced, at high rates: £100 for every foreigner practising retail trade, with a further £100 licence if the trade involved spirits. I should here mention that a "foreigner" was simply defined as any person not ordinarily resident in the Company's domains: it had no significance of race or colour. As such, the term covered Europeans, and Africans from Lagos or the Oil Rivers Protectorate. The effect of, and strictures on, this high fee are commented on in the report on the Brass rising.<sup>1</sup> It is idle to pretend that no monopoly existed; on the other hand, as Goldie once pointed out to the shareholders<sup>2</sup>, it must be borne in mind that the Company, unlike its British South African and British North Borneo contemporaries, was forbidden to derive dividend-revenue from taxation and had consequently to rely entirely on its trading profits. It is of interest to note that the Company averaged dividends of 6%. It even had to levy customs duties on its own imports and exports, just as if it were any other trading concern.

The Senior Judicial Officer had very wide powers, though the Council in London remained the final court of appeal. To this post the Company appointed Sir James Marshall, who in 1882 had retired as Chief Justice of the Gold Coast<sup>3</sup> (which then included Lagos in its jurisdiction) while Mr. W.H.H. Kelke of the Chancery Bar was made Puisne Judge.

The District Agents had responsibilities similar to those later exercised by Administrative Officers in the first 50 years of government by the Crown, whether executive, judicial, or quasi-military. No attempt was made to codify local law, and apart from incidents repugnant to natural equity, the natives came into contact with the Company's legal system only when there was a dispute in intercourse with foreigners.

In August, 1886, Regulation 16 was issued. This dealt with the establishment and maintenance of the Royal Niger Constabulary, a unit not only famous in its own right but also the forerunner of the equally glorious RWAFF.

Ten years later the Constabulary Amendment Regulation was passed. In London I came across a copy of these "Standard Orders for the Royal Niger Constabulary", which is excitingly inscribed "Adj't. 1st Bn. Niger Expeditionary Force". This Regu-

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1. Parliamentary Papers, 1896, lix.

2. Annual general meeting of the Royal Niger Company Ltd., July 1897.

3. There is a note on Marshall in an article by T. O. Elias in *West Africa*, 19 November, 1955.



lation supplemented the original establishment and provided for military details that could not conveniently find a place in a law.

The officer cadre of the force had now expanded to 1 commandant, 1 adjutant, 12 sub-commandants, and 4 under-officers. These last-named are probably one of the earliest examples of Nigerianisation; an analogy can be found in the superb Viceroy's Commissioned Officers of the Indian Army. The force, of over a thousand men, was divided into three companies: no. 1 was the Hausa Coy.; no. 2 the Yoruba Coy.; while no. 3 comprised Fanti, Igala and Borgu men. The constabulary headquarters was to be at Lokoja, with permanent detachments at Ibi and Asaba. Coinage was acceptable only at Akassa; elsewhere payments were made by means of an order on the local factory for barter goods. I have been able to trace some of these original account ledgers, and most interesting they are.

The men enlisted for 3 years; on re-engagement for a further 3 years, a bonus was paid. Pay, ranging from 60/- p.m. for a R.S.M. to 15/- for a bandboy, totalled about £8,000 a year for other ranks and £10,000 for officer establishment. Rations consisted of 6oz. of beef and either  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. yams or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. rice each day.

Clothes were issued every 6 months, though the greatcoat and blanket had to last 3 years. The fatigue dress consisted of blue jean trousers and a grey woollen shirt. An officer's dress comprised a Norfolk jacket of khaki, with a standing collar, 5 gilt buttons, 4 patch pockets, khaki knickerbockers and field boots. His helmet was a white and red puggaree, with a brass spike and chain. A white drill patrol jacket, white trousers and a red cummerbund were used for ceremonial parades.

Leaving aside the large 1897 campaign against Nupe and Ilorin—in itself a notable military milestone—we find the Royal Niger Constabulary taking part in a number of actions on the Benue. Jibu, for instance, was a constant threat to the caravan routes; it was bombarded in 1884,<sup>1</sup> stormed by the Constabulary in 1888 in their first blooding on the Benue, and again in 1891.

For the period 1888 to May 1889 no less than seven punitive expeditions were carried out. A typical entry on the return submitted to the Council runs thus:

*Patrol:* Zhibu, 31st August 1888.

*Cause:* Threatening messages, stopping legitimate trade, and conspiracy.

*Casualties:* None.

*Loss of enemy:* Unknown.

*Numbers engaged:* 4 Constabulary officers, 200 privates. 40 Allies.  
Assisted by Executive officials.

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1. The Museum of the Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment has recently acquired a remarkable relic of this campaign: the missive screwed into the nose of a shell fired into the town by William Wallace, and treated by the inhabitants of Jibu with revered awe.

*Length of engagement:* One day.

*Result:* Quietness and free passage for trade.

*Vessels employed:* "Kano" and "Sokoto".

1895 saw tough patrols against Kacalla of Takum;<sup>1</sup> there was more fighting in 1897, in the Munshi territory, and at Gashua and Wase in 1898, while as late in the Company's life as 1899 punitive patrols were carried out against Montol and Wurio. This same year saw the Suntai patrol, which, besides being one of the most famous actions of the Constabulary, may perhaps rank as characteristic of all the minor campaigns of this period.

Briefly this is the narrative. Captain Parker, a most gallant Constabulary officer, had been sent to bolster up the authority of Sarkin Kudu, the effete ruler of Bakundi. Given 40 soldiers, Parker was instructed to 'show the flag'; this he decided to do at Suntai, Bakundi's most recalcitrant vassal. The small force was met with a volley of arrows. Parker led a charge against the town wall and was speared to death as he was about to scale it. The patrol withdrew to Ibi, whereupon the Company assembled a strong column of over 200 men, armed with a 7-pounder and a maxim gun. Suntai was heroically defended, and when it was eventually taken, with 5 of the Company's men killed and 23 wounded, the Commander of the Company troops presented his word to the Chief of Suntai as a token of his admiration of the town's valour.

It is not widely known that the Royal Niger Company maintained its own postal service. The first post office was opened at Akassa, their depot station, 1887; in the absence of normal stamps, the G.P.O. allowed outgoing mail to be franked with the Company's rubber stamp. The rate was 6d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. From 1895 certain British stamps were purchased by the Company and then cancelled with their rubber stamp at five stations: Akassa, Burutu, Abutshi, Lokoja and Jebba—the latter place had no handstamp and the postage stamps were cancelled in red ink. From a philatelic point, there are 12 different collectors' pieces, for which the market is very strong. A contemporary traveller to the Coast has given us graphic description of the mail-service on the rivers: "Two white-painted canoes, manned by naked paddlers, grounded against the bank. They solemnly unloaded two big barrels painted vermilion, with yellow cabalistics, which presumably represented the letters VR, straggling across the end. A padlocked lid, probably closed water-tight, was placed on the other end, and a little flag fixed in a socket, while the sable postman carried a staff in token of authority. The barrels contained Her Majesty's mail. . . . the reason for carrying letters so is that the 18" wide canoes come to grief by capsizing or otherwise at times. Then the floating cask with its flag ensures the safety of its contents".<sup>2</sup>

1. See, for example, *Times* of 31st August, 1896.

2. H. Bindloss, *In the Niger Country*, 1898, p. 136.

Another little-known but highly commendable undertaking was the Company's £3,000 Botanical Gardens at Asaba, set up with the help of Mr. Thiselton Dyer, Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew.

And so to trade, which after all was the *raison d'être* of the Company. What of the establishment and development of trade in the Benue ventures, frequently described in the Chairman's reports as the "most promising" undertakings?

First, the treaties. Most of the Benue ones were concluded between 1884 and 1892; when subjected to strict legal scrutiny, their validity is at times questionable.

The Company had ten standard forms and a few various ones. Form 4 was fairly commonly used in the Benue, for instance for Numan, Gashaka and Abinsi, and its provisions will give us a good idea of the general purport of these treaties:

"Agreement made on the . . . day of 18 . . . between . . . on one hand and the National African Company (Ltd.) on the other." (These treaties were concluded in 1885, before the change in the Company's title.)

"We, the undersigned King and Chiefs of . . . with the view to the bettering of the condition of our country and people, do this day cede to the National African Company (Ltd.), their heirs and assigns, for ever, the whole of our territory extending from . . .

We also give to the said National African Company (Ltd.) full power to settle all native disputes arising from any cause whatsoever, and we pledge ourselves not to enter into any war with other tribes without the sanction of the National African Company (Ltd.)

We also understand that the said National African Company (Ltd.) have full power to mine, farm and build in any portion of our . . .

We bind ourselves not to have any intercourse with any strangers or foreigners except through the said National African Company (Ltd.), and we give the said National African Company (Ltd.) full power to exclude all other strangers and foreigners from their territory at their discretion.

In consideration of the foregoing, the National African Company (Ltd.) bind themselves not to interfere with any of the native laws or customs of the country, consistent with the maintenance of order and good government.

The said National African Company (Ltd.) agree to pay native owners of land a reasonable amount for any portion they may require.

The said National African Company (Ltd.) bind themselves to protect the said King and Chiefs from the attacks by any neighbouring aggressive tribes.

In consideration of the above, the said National African Company (Ltd.) have this day paid the said King and Chiefs of . . . goods to the value of . . . receipt of which is hereby acknowledged.

This Agreement having been interpreted to us, the above-mentioned King and Chiefs of . . . , we hereby approve and accept it for



ourselves and for our people with their consent”.

Then followed the marks of the King and Chiefs, the signature of the Company's agent, and the solemn declaration by the interpreter.

The subsidies, which the Commissioner of the 1890 inquiry described as “somewhat irregularly paid in this river”, amounted to £293-4-3 per annum. Muri, with £60, was the largest; Bakundi was paid £33-16-3, Gashaka £19-19-8, Numan 30/-, and one chief only 19/9d. In parenthesis I may mention that I once read that Lugard declared that the Sultan of Sokoto regarded his subsidy simply as a tribute from a vassal!

The Benue district was the largest in the Company's territories. In 1885 the National African Company, overcoming their fear of the notorious Munshi who, as we have seen, had driven out their predecessor six years earlier, explored the Katsina Ala and opened three factories in the heart of Munshi land. But within a few months two of their agents, Hoyland and Griffiths, had been murdered at Adasha and Tiga, and the store plundered. Yet by 1889 there were 7 factories, with a further three under construction; a depot at Sindiri, at the mouth of the Taraba; two new steel hulks stationed in the river, the *Africa* and *Nigeria* each of 370 tons, and the ss. *Niger* moored off Mount Herbert, between Abinsi and Ibi. This expansion was the policy of Goldie, who told his shareholders<sup>1</sup> that he saw no hope of improvement in the price of palm-kernels, “which, after long and persistent research, appear to form the only considerable resources of the maritime districts” and that he was therefore turning the Company's attention inland, perhaps eventually to the organized cultivation of indigo, tobacco and cotton. Of the factories, Loko was, despite its average size, one of the most important because of its position as a starting point for caravans to Sokoto, and it accordingly became the base for all communications between the Company and the Sultan. The headquarters of the Benue district was at Ibi, where the “exceedingly substantial and well-built house”, measuring 70ft. x 40ft. and complete with galvanized roof, later became the first Residency. Here were also three iron Moreton Stores, one of which was used as an armoury, barracks for 50 Constabulary troops, and plenty of outhouses. Another big factory, and reputedly the best-kept on the river, was that at Bakundi, where the outhouses were enclosed in a split-bamboo fence and boasted an artistic dovecot. Benniseed was the principal produce at Abinsi, Arago and Donga; ivory at Ibi and Bakundi; and gum-arabic at Mairanawa, Kunini and Numan. Kunini was also a rubber experimental station. The 3 new stations of Mozum, Bofun and Odeni, were like Donga, interested in rubber, while the hulk off Ribago (Garua) bought nearly every category of produce. Kunini, with its branch factory at Lau, had two European agents; it was not only an important wooding-station, but also managed to buy some tin.

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1. Annual General Meeting of the Royal Niger Company Ltd., July 1894.

Despite the treaties, the establishment of a trading factory on the Benue was no simple task. Witness the vicissitudes of the Yola venture.<sup>1</sup> After the Flegel alarms, Wallace had been despatched to approach the Lamido in 1883; in exchange for presents permission was given to open trade and erect a factory. When he visited the Lamido in the following year, he received a very cold welcome and was astonished to learn that the permission had been rescinded. Accordingly, a hulk was towed up instead; she was forbidden to tie up at first but a falling river meant any other course was out of the question. Further difficulties developed in 1886, with orders being given and then countermanded, and it was another ten years before the Lamido allowed the Company to settle ashore. Again, the Muri ventures of Lau and Kunini were sacked by the Emir in 1891; aggravated by the Mizon affair, the position did not allow of a reconciliation with the Company until 1895. Again there was Macintosh's remarkable trek from Ribago to Kukawa in an attempt to forestall the French in entering into commercial relations with the Bornu empire.<sup>2</sup> After weeks of negotiation and fair promises, the Company's gifts were suddenly returned and the Shehu, to quote Goldie's own meiosis, "kindly conveyed to Mr. Macintosh a hint that a prolongation of his stay there would be dangerous".

Yet again, the relationship between the Company and the Mbulla people, who held an agency for the supply of firewood, was continually near breaking point; this virile people enjoyed many a turbulent passage with the Company's forces.<sup>3</sup>

No study of either the expansion on the Benue or the Royal Niger Company's administration thereon would be complete without reference to its international difficulties. Let us then momentarily touch on the conflicts with France and Germany.

To understand fully the delicate international position on the Benue we must for a moment paint on a broader canvas than that of the river alone. The decisive agreements<sup>4</sup> were these, in chronological sequence. The General Act of the Berlin Conference, in particular the Act of Navigation for the Niger *and* its affluents, to which the free navigation articles of the 1815 Congress of Vienna were deemed to apply, set the scene. Then came the Anglo-German agreement of 1885, defining the spheres of influence in the Gulf of Guinea, and its supplementary agreement which extended this sphere from the Rio del Rey river up to Yola. Of the utmost importance were the Anglo-French Agreement of 1890 and the Anglo-German Agreement of 1893, both of which brought in the question of Lake Chad, the goal of so many of the post-Scramble expeditions. To the Commissions set up to establish the exact Say-Barrawa line,

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1. The story is told at greater length in my *Adamawa Past and Present*, O.U.P., 1958.

2. Annual General Meeting of the Royal Niger Company Limited, 1892.

3. See, for example, the Northern Nigeria News-sheet 1933.

4. See E. Hertslet, *Map of Africa by Treaty*, 1894.

Britain maintained that the French should abstain from aggrandisement immediately south or east of Lake Chad: the entrants in the race for Chad and Bornu were lining up already, though in the event the French, British and Germans were beaten to it by Rabeh. The Company had made a strenuous effort to accelerate its contact with Bornu, but it soon realised that a *Drang nach Osten* was now beyond its resources. Goldie saw that the power that held Lake Chad would control Bornu; if this power were France, then the Sokoto empire would be squeezed and sandwiched by French African territories. To prevent such a disaster to the Company, Goldie's thoughts turned to Germany as a buffer power in the Chad hinterland. Germany was at that time considered a preferable neighbour, and her admission as a wedge between British and French territories was manoeuvred by the 1893 Agreement which so shocked France: Germany was left to put the brake on French advances in the Chad basin. An enclave round Yola remained within British territory, but from the Faro confluence most of Southern Adamawa went to Germany, while to the northwards a straight line to Chad carved up the Lamido's kingdom. A division of the Cameroons was effected by the Franco-German treaty of 1894.

Article V of the 1890 treaty had laid down that either power was entitled to a free passage to Lake Chad through any of the territories acquired by the other north of the Benue and east of Yola: no transit dues could be levied. Thus, after the earlier alarms caused by Herr Flegel of the Lagos-based Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation, there was no difficulty over the German expeditions up the Benue led by Morgen, Stetten, Uechtritz and Passarge.

With the French, however, it was a very different kettle of fish, principally because of the two Mizon expeditions. They form by themselves a chapter of history on the Upper Benue; here we need say no more than that Mizon attempted to deny the validity of the Company's treaties on the river. He met with some success in Yola and with an unsavoury personal triumph in Muri; the whole episode proved, to say the least, a very uncomfortable thorn in the Company flesh besides threatening discredit to the French Government.

And so we come to our journey's end. The Crown bought out the Royal Niger Company (the details of the local purchases<sup>1</sup> are of extreme interest) and on the assumption of government from the Royal Niger Company on 1st January 1900, Sir Frederick Lugard divided the new Northern Nigerian Protectorate into the three Civil Provinces of the Middle Niger, Benue and Kano, and the two Military Provinces of Bornu and Borgu. The Company's Benue district was, in the provincial reorganisation gazetted in August, separated into Upper and Lower Benue; to the former the Emirate of Muri was transferred from Bornu. Yola Province was, for a

1. Parliamentary Papers, 1899, lxiii.



number of reasons, not taken in hand till September 1901, when the town was occupied after a very sharp battle, the details of which I have described in detail elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Historically and commercially, we have followed the flood of the Mother of Waters from Lander to Lugard; a geographical post-script, and then our story is done. Lander disproved the theory that the Benue, previously thought to be the main stream of the Niger, flowed eastwards to the Nile, and christened this new westward-flowing river the Tshadda, from its reputed source as an outlet of the Lake. Macgregor Laird rejected this assumption and called the river the Shary, and it was not until the expeditions of Barth and Baikie that the Benue's true identity was established. Even so, it was another 30 years before Flegel camped near its source in 1882 and the Royal Niger Company agents explored it above Garua, following both the Benue till it lost itself in the mountains round Bubanjidda, and its tributary the Mayo Kebbi. This was the route, through the Tuburi marshes, to join the Logone and Shari, that the heroic Lenfant<sup>2</sup> explored in 1904, thus proving the existence of a waterway from the Niger to Lake Chad.<sup>3</sup>

As the Royal Niger Company had based its expansion and administration on the natural highway of the Mother of Waters, so did Lugard's policy demand a government to cover the vital lines of communication of the Benue and of the caravan routes to Chad. Thus was Barth's vision, conjured up half a century earlier as he stood on the banks of the Benue, realised: "...along this natural highroad European influence and commerce will penetrate into the very heart of the Continent..."<sup>4</sup> Broad and with serene majesty still flows the Mother of Waters:-

"Gaudy butterflies wheel and flutter,  
Flash into sight and are gone again;  
Round our bows the dark waters mutter;  
Black clouds are gathering up for rain.  
First faint murmurs of far-off thunder  
Roll in the hills, as round the bend  
Appears Mount Patti, and close thereunder  
Red-roofed Lokoja, our journey's end".<sup>5</sup>

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1. In my *Adamawa Past and Present*, 1958.
  2. E. Lenfant, *La Grande Route de Tchad*, Paris, 1905.
  3. For a recent geographical review see A. T. Grave, *The Benue Valley*, published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Kaduna, 1957.
  4. H. Barth, op. cit., p. 468.
  5. C. A. Woodhouse, *Nigerian Verses*, 1933.

# SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN SUDAN

*Submitted by H. F. C. Smith*

THAT THE publication of books has been an important industry in the western Sudan since the 16th century is a fact to which historians of the present day do not seem generally to be attaching sufficient significance. The '*ulamā*' of the region continue, of course, to live in a world where the writing and copying of books has been going on for several centuries. But the revolution in historical study occasioned elsewhere by the introduction of printing and photo-copying, has as yet had little influence on this world. And at present very few '*ulamā*' are coming forward with new editions of ancient texts. Even the copying trade appears to be in a state of stagnation. At the same time, there is now rapidly growing up in West Africa a class of professional historian attached to the new Western-type institutions of higher learning, and a class of history teacher in the schools, who are mainly pre-occupied with the history of the European world and its impact on Africa, or (in a minority of cases) with oral traditions of those West African peoples who possess no writing older than the recently adopted Roman script. Both the *mu'allam* on the one hand therefore, and the professional historian on the other, are failing at present to exploit the wealth of documentary historical material in the form of works written in the Arabic language which have been produced in the western Sudan, particularly in the last two hundred years.<sup>1</sup>

There are two problems involved here. There is the problem of the study of these documents. But more immediate than this is the problem of their preservation and their availability to scholars. Paper and ink are perishable, and it is quite essential for modern scholarship, be it conceived from the Islamic point of view or from the Western, that collections of originals or reliable copies of old manuscripts should be established where proper provision may be made for their permanent preservation by photo-copying or other means. A number of such collections have, of course, already been established.<sup>2</sup> But these are by no means exhaustive, as important

1. Early this century the work of printing and translating texts was, of course, vigorously taken up by scholars such as M. Delafosse, H. Gaden, Ismail Hamet, O. Houdas, H. R. Palmer etc. But, except for one or two isolated contributions in more recent times, their work has not been followed up, and the bulk of the material remains unexploited.
2. The following collections in West Africa are known to the author of this note: the University College collection at Ibadan, the Lugard Hall collection in Kaduna, the Native Authority Arabic Library collection in Kano, the Northern Region Literature Agency collection in Zaria, the IFAN collection in Dakar.

The following collections are known in Europe: the Archinard papers in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the de Gironcourt papers in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France in Paris, the Whitting papers in the Cambridge University Library.

texts are still to be found in private hands.<sup>1</sup> It is also the case that some of the institutions in which such collections are located do not have adequate facilities for the permanent preservation of written documents by modern scientific methods.

Not only, however, are these collections incomplete, but they are also not properly available for the use of historians, be they either the '*ulamā*' or scholars of the Western type. The collections are widely dispersed, but this, in the era of the photo-copy, is not a consideration of great importance. The important consideration is that the collections are not adequately published. Thus, for example, it is not possible for a *mu'allam* of Northern Nigeria at the present time to know where he can consult all the writings of 'Uthmān b. Fūdī which have been preserved. Certainly some work of publication in this sense has been done.<sup>2</sup> But it has been done almost entirely in learned journals which have not in the past had any great currency in West Africa, and in any case the work of cataloguing collections remains in its infancy.<sup>3</sup>

It is with these considerations in mind that a plan for a *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts bearing on the History of the Western Sudan* has been conceived in the Department of History of the University College, Ibadan. This handlist will show the provenance in institutional collections of the manuscripts which it describes, and will, it is hoped, place in the hands of scholars an instrument which will help them to produce that history of Islamic society in the Western Sudan which undoubtedly can be produced from the abundance of documentary material available.

In connection with this work an appeal must clearly be made to the private possessors of texts. There is undoubtedly an obligation to the world of scholarship to ensure that texts are properly preserved and, in so far as this is reasonable, made available to students either among the '*ulamā*' or among those professional historians who have

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1. I am indebted to Messers R. Mauny and J. Charpy for an indication that this is certainly true of the French territory. Communications from '*ulamā*' and other students in Northern Nigeria also lead me to believe that a wealth of manuscripts continues to remain generally unknown in private hands. The importance of private collections is not merely that they may contain MSS not preserved in public institutions, but that they may include more reliable and otherwise useful copies than are available elsewhere.

In this connection it is interesting to note that W.E.N. Kensdale has listed 242 works by 'Uthman b. Fudi, 'Abdullah b. Fudi and Muhammad Bello. But only 133 of these are preserved in the institutional collections mentioned above.

2. A list of such bibliographical notices is given at the end of this note.

3. Thus, for example, no progress has yet been made in the cataloguing of Arabic manuscripts in the possession of Native Authorities in Northern Nigeria other than the Kano Authority.



a sincere interest in these studies.<sup>1</sup> In Nigeria there at present two institutions where the most modern facilities for the preservation and publication of texts are available. These are the federal repository of the National Archives and the Library of the University College, both in Ibadan. It is hoped that the compilation of the handlist referred to above will be accompanied by the building up of major collections (partly in photo-copy) in both these institutions<sup>2</sup> which alone are in a position to make copies of manuscripts available to scholars throughout West Africa.

The compilation of the Ibadan handlist will, however, take time, and the need for work on the documents is urgent. It is therefore proposed as an interim measure to publish in the pages of this *Journal*, and in the *Bulletin of News* of the Historical Society of Nigeria, details of manuscripts and their location as they come to light. As a contribution in this direction some details are published here of a collection preserved in the library of the Institut de France in Paris.

### THE DE GIRONCOURT PAPERS<sup>3</sup>

Contained in Volumes 2304-16 of the manuscript collection of the library of the Institut de France are 223 Arabic manuscripts collected by the archaeologist Georges de Gironcourt in the course of an expedition to the region of the Niger bend in 1911.<sup>4</sup> A short notice of this collection was subsequently published by D.-P. de Pedrals in 1950.<sup>5</sup> But this notice, though provocative, does not seem to have excited the attention of scholars.

The collection appears to consist entirely of works written in the Western Sahara and Sudan. All except three of the MSS are copies made at the behest of de Gironcourt by local 'ulamā', and, as copies, they present a very wide range of quality. The hands vary from fine

1. Acknowledgment must here be made of the way in which some years ago the Emir of Gwandu made available to the Northern Regional Government in Nigeria his collection of the works of 'Abdullah b. Fudi. The Emir of Bauchi has also generously permitted the Librarian of the University College, Ibadan, to take photocopies of a number of important MSS in his private collection. More recently, Mr. M. Hiskett of the Kano School for Arabic Studies has volunteered to produce a catalogue of his own private collection.

As this note goes to press, Mallam Muntaka Coomassie of Zaria has also permitted his interesting collection to be photographed in the University College, Ibadan.

2. There already exists in the University College Library a collection of some 150 MSS. This valuable collection was made by W. E. N. Kensdale, who has done important pioneer work in this field.

3. See: Bouteron, M. & Tremblot, J., *Catalogue général des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France. Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Institut, ancien et nouveau Fonds* (Paris, 1928).

4. See: de Gironcourt, G., *Repertoire des Manuscrits rapportés du Soudan par la Mission de Gironcourt* (Missions de Gironcourt, Paris, 1920).

5. *L'Archéologie de l'Afrique noire*, pp. 69-74 (Paris, 1950).

Maghribi to the coarsest Western Sudani, and copyists' errors may be frequent. Although he performed an invaluable service to scholars by making this collection, de Girnocourt does not seem to have been an Arabist, and was unable to check the quality of the copies. Generally speaking, however, the texts are clean and easily readable. But no work of any importance seems yet to have been done on this collection.<sup>1</sup>

A very brief examination of the manuscripts was made during August 1958 by the author of this note, and the following remarks are submitted on some of the more outstanding items represented.

### 'Abdullah b. Fudī

Copies of 8 works, obtained either in Say or Sinder. Those obtained in Sinder are said to have been made from copies transcribed in the library of Aṭ-Ṭāhir b. 'Alī at Sokoto in the 1890's. Of these works the following are well-known and exist in one or other of the collections cited above:

*Al-masa'il* (extract of 3 ff. only),

*Ḍiyā' al-ḥukkām fīmā lahum wa'alayhim min al-aḥkām,*

*Ḍiyā' al-mujāhidīn,*

*Ḍiyā' ūlī al-amr wal-mujāhidīn fī sīrat an-nabī wal-khulafā' ar-rāshidīn,*

*Tazyīn al-waraqāt bijam' ba'ḍ mā lī min al-abyāt.*

In addition there are copies of the following works which, although two of them are well-known, do not appear in the collections cited above:

*Ḍiyā' as-sultān wa ghayrihi min al-ikhwān fī aḥamm mā yaṭlub 'ilmahu fī umūr az-zamān*

33 ff. in coarse to fair Western Sudani hands. Written in 1227/1812. (Catalogued as MS No. 205, 'Diaou El Soultan')

*Ḍiyā' al-muqtaddīn lil-khulafā' ar-rāshidīn*

48 ff. mostly in coarse to fair Western Sudani hands, with some coarse Maghribi. This work does not appear in the list compiled by Kensdale.

(Catalogued as MS No. 192, 'Diaou El Mouktadin')

*Ḍiyā' al-wilāyāt fil-umūr ad-dunyawiya wad-dīniyat*

7 ff. of widely spaced and coarse Western Sudani. Completed, according to the text, on 26 Dhu-l-qa'da, 1203/1788, but this is un-

1. J. Rouch, for example, was unable to use these MSS for his study of the Songhai, though he knew of their existence.

doubtedly a copyist's error. It does not appear in Kensdale's list, though a work with a similar title (*An-niyāt fil-a'māl ad-dunya-wiya wad-dīniyāt*) does.

(Catalogued as MS N. 190, 'Diaou El Oualiat')

#### ‘Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa’di and other(s) (?)

*No title* ( $\frac{1}{3}$  of first folio missing)

96 ff. in fair Maghribi, very old, browned, stained and brittle. Ff. 1-37 badly holed ( $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of each folio missing). Obtained in Sinder, and, according to a note on the last folio in a Western Sudani hand, belonging at one time to Khalil b. ‘Abdullah b. Fūdī (the third Fulani Emir of Gwandu?).

There is also a copy, made in 1911, of ff. 43-96. This amounts to 151 ff. in various Western Sudani hands, some coarse and corrupt.

This MS begins exactly as Houdas's text of the famous *Tārīkh as-Sūdān*, but was completed (according to the last folio) in 1183/1769-70, or more than a century after the latter. Again a passage copied at random from folio 43, referring to events in 1051/1641-2, does not appear in the published text of the *Tārīkh as-Sūdān*, even though the latter records events down to 1065/1654-5.

Here then is a composite MS of great importance, likely to contain valuable material for the late 17th and early 18th centuries for which at present only the *Tadhkirat an-nisiān* is generally known. It is possible that it contains part of the anonymous work, *Dīwān al-mulūk fī salāṭīn as-Sūdān*, which, though recovered from Timbuktu 60 years ago by Félix Dubois, also seems to have escaped the attention of scholars<sup>1</sup>.

(Catalogued as MS No. 200, 'Histoire des Songhays et des Rois du Soudan')

#### Anonymous

9 MSS (14 ff.) containing traditional accounts of the origin of the Fulani people. Three of these manuscripts are said to have been copied from very old documents preserved at Dia. A French translation of one (No. 213) is given in de Pedrals (op. cit., pp. 72-4). (Catalogued as MSS Nos. 10-12, 74, 119, 122, 123, 164 & 213)

#### Anonymous (?)

18 MSS (73 ff.) of a very miscellaneous nature bearing on the history of the Songhai both before and after the Moorish conquest.

Our knowledge of the history of the Songhai, even in their great days, is derived on the written documents side from less than a dozen

1. *Tombouktou le Mystérieux* (Paris, 1897), p. 419.



texts, The paucity of the texts makes critical analysis of them in any detail extremely difficult. The MSS mentioned here, therefore, may well prove to be an invaluable addition to our stock.

(Catalogued as MSS No. 2, 70-3, 129, 168-74, 181, 189, 197, 198 & 212)

### **Anonymous (?)**

*Ad-durr an-nafīs fī ins az-ẓā'in waj-jalīs*

235 ff. in fair and closely written Western Sudani. Obtained from the chief Muhammad Ouginatt of the Kel es-Souk in the Niger bend.

This is said by de Gironcourt to be a history of the "premières infiltrations musulmanes", compiled by the '*ulamā*' of the Kel es-Souk. Our knowledge of the way in which Islam first penetrated into the western Sudan is vague in the extreme, and a work such as this could be of first class importance.

(Catalogued as MS No. 132, 'Tarikh Es Sahabaten')

Interesting also in this connection is MS No. 10 in the collection which is said to deal with the first Muslim penetration into the Futa Toro.

### **Ash-Shaykh Ahmad and Ahmad b. ash-Shaykh (Cheikou Amadou and Amadou Cheikou)**

37 MSS (64 ff.) of correspondence and proclamations of the first two rulers of the Fulani state of Massina (1818-53)

The letters include correspondence between the Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī and the Sayyid al-Bakka'i and Cheikou Amadou.

The work of these two rulers, contemporaries and close neighbours of Muḥammad Bello and 'Atīq b. 'Uthmān, has not yet attracted much attention in Nigeria. A study of Massina is, however, important for placing the Sokoto Fulani empire in its proper international setting. Work on documentary evidence such as is given here would provide a useful supplement to the valuable compilation of the oral tradition of Massina recently completed by Amadou Hampaté Ba and J. Daget.<sup>1</sup>

(Catalogued as MSS Nos, 22-5, 28, 30-6, 38, 42-61, 63, 64, 66 & 69)

### **Muhammad Bello**

Copies of 7 works. Obtained either in Say or Sinder. Of these works the following are well-known and exist in one or other of the collections cited above:

1. *L'Empire peul du Macina*, I (1818-1853) (Etudes soudanaises de l'IFAN No. 3, 1955).

*Al-inṣāf fī dhikr ma fī masā'il al-khilāfa min wafā' wa-khilāf,*  
*Raf' al-ishtibāh fī ta'lluq billah ta'la wa bi ahl allah.*

The remainder are as follows:

*Ar-raghba*

9 ff. in fair, widely spaced Western Sudani. This work does not appear in Kensdale's list.

(Catalogued as MS No. 187, 'Al Rahabato')

*Aqwa asbāb an-naṣr lil mujāhidīn*

9 ff. of fair Maghribi with some coarse Western Sudani. This is also not it Kensdale's list.

(Catalogued as MS No. 219, 'Akoua Asbab')

*Risāla min amīr al-mu'minīn Muḥammad Bal b. ash-Shaykh 'Uthmān b. Fūdī . . . . . ila jamā'at al-islām*

4 ff. in good Maghribi and Western Sudani.

It is said by de Gironcourt to concern the campaigns of the Sokoto Fulani in Liptako. The extent to which the power of the Sokoto empire extended into what is now French territory is an interesting question which has not received much attention from scholars in Nigeria.

(Catalogued as MS No. 201, 'Du Liptako')

*Another risāla*

4 ff. in fair Western Sudani.

(Catalogued as MS No. 219, 'Lettre de Mohamma Bello')

*Madārij as-salūma fī jumla min masā'il (?) al-imāma*

10 ff. in various fair Maghribi and Western Sudani hands. Not in Kensdale's list.

(Catalogued as MS No. 217, 'Madaridiou Salamati')

**Muhammad 'Abdullah b. Abi Bakr al-Bartili**

*Faṭh ash-shukūr fī ma'rifat a'yān 'ulamā' at-Takrūr*

40 ff. in small clear Maghribi with some Western Sudani, possibly incomplete. Copy made in 1911 in Adrar of the Iforas.

This is a biographical dictionary similar in form to that of Aḥmad Bābā whose name appears as the first entry. It is apparently well known in the French territory, and in 1920 a text of it was being prepared for publication by the Gouverneur Delafosse and P. Marty.<sup>1</sup> But there is no trace at Ibadan of the appearance of this

1. See Marty, P., *Etudes sur l'Islam et les Tribus du Soudan* (Paris, 1920) tome II, p. 89.

publication.<sup>1</sup> Clearly an important work meriting study in detail. (Catalogued as MS No. 118, 'Tarikh Fatah Chokour')

### **Muhammad b. al-Mukhtar al-Kunti**

*Al-ṭarā'if wat-talā'id bikarāmāt ash-shaykhayn al-wālida wal-wālid*

277 ff, in various small Maghribi hands, very old and browned, but mostly readable, lacking doxology and colophon. The copy is said by de Gironcourt to have been in the possession of the author himself.

This very important biography of the shaykh al-Mukhtār al-Kabīr al-Kunti has been translated into French by Ismail Hamet<sup>2</sup>, but it does not appear to be widely known in Nigeria at the present time. Another copy is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Arabe No. 5334, 155 ff.)

(Catalogued as MS No. 121, 'Tarikh Taraif')

### **'Uthman b. Fudī**

Copies of 13 works, obtained either in Say or Sinder. Of these the following 7 are well-known, and copies of them exist in one or other of the collections mentioned above:

*Bayān wujūb al-hijra 'ala al-'ibād,*

*Sirāj al-ikhwān fī aḥamm mā yuḥtāj ilayhi fī hadhā-z-zamān,*

*Al-farq bayn wilāyāt ahl al-kufr fī wilāyātihim wa bayn wilāyāt ahl al-islām fī wilāyātihim,*

*Masa'il muḥimma,*

*Najm al-ikhwān yuḥtadūna biḥn allah fī umūr az-zamān,<sup>3</sup>*

*Naṣīḥat ahl az-zamān,*

*Nūr al-albāb.*

The MS of *Naṣīḥat ahl az-zamān* is a very old one, and is claimed by de Gironcourt to be 'an original'. It consists of 39 ff. in fair Western Sudani, badly stained but readable. (MS No. 211 in the collection.)

In addition there are the following, some well-known, which do not appear in any of the collections cited above:

*Anwā' māl allah allatī yajūz lil-umrā' qanḍuhā (?) wa ṣadfuḥā*

13 ff. in fair Western Sudani, but without any indication of authorship. This work does not figure in Kensdale's list, and its attribution to 'Uthmān b. Fūdī will require confirmation.

(Catalogued as MS No. 194, 'Anouahi Milillay')

1. There is undoubtedly great need in this work of bibliography for the closest co-operation between scholars working in the French and British territories, and for the accumulation in the West African centres of research of accurate information on printed publications in this field.
2. In the *Revue du Monde Musulman*, XII, 1914.
3. The only copy in the known collections is at Ibadan, and this is incomplete. The author of this note possesses another copy.



*Tanbīh al-ikhwān ‘ala aḥwāl arḍ as-Sūdān*

12 ff. in various coarse to fair Western Sudani hands. This very well-known work has been translated into English by Sir Richmond Palmeri, but it undoubtedly merits further study.

(Catalogued as MS No. 208, ‘Tanbiou El Ichouane’)

*Kifāyat al-muslimīn*

8 ff., incomplete, in fair Maghribi (one folio in coarse Western Sudani). Not in Kensdale’s list.

(Catalogued as MS No. 218, ‘Kifai’atou El Mousselemine’)

*Misbāḥ li ahl hadhā-z-zamān min ahl bilād as-Sūdān*

28 ff. in fair Western Sudani. Not in Kensdale’s list.

(Catalogued as MS No. 177, ‘Misbaoh Alidjeman’)

*Mimū yanbagh an yaḥfazahu kull man qawī aj-jihād fī sabīl allah ‘ashara umūr*

3 ff. in fair Western Sudani. A fragment which does not contain the author’s name. Possibly an excerpt from another work.

(Catalogued as MS No. 216, ‘Lettre etc’)

*Wathīqa min Ibn Fūdī amīr al-mu’ minīn ‘Uthmān ila jamī’ ahl as-Sūdān wa ila man shā’ allah min al-ikhwān fil-buldān*

2 ff. in coarse Western Sudani. A proclamation. 2 copies, (Catalogued as MSS Nos. 204, ‘Proclamation.’ and 215, ‘Lettre’)

**‘Umar b. Sa’id al-Futī at-Turī at-Tijānī**

*Suyūf as-sa’id al-m’utaqid fī ahl allah kat-tijānī ‘ala ruqbat as-saqa at-tarīd al-muntaqid aj-jānī*

111 ff. in coarse to fair Western Sudani. Obtained in Say.

There is a notice of this work in Vajda (see below), and two other copies are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Arabe Nos. 5401, ff. 1-38 & 5651, ff. 406-39.) It was written in 1252/1836-7, and is a valuable source for the teachings of the great Tijānī reformer and son-in-law of Muḥammad Bello.

(Catalogued as MS No. 214, ‘Bissoyoufi El Soyidi’)

These very brief and incomplete notes were made hurriedly in the course of two days spent with the manuscripts, and do not claim to indicate even all the outstanding items in the collection. The object of publishing them now is to draw the badly needed attention of scholars to what de Pedrals called “le recueil le plus important existant de textes relatifs à l’Afrique noire et à son passé, de source non-européenne”.<sup>2</sup>

1. In *Journal of the African Society*, XIII & XIV, (1914-5)

2. The Archinard papers in the Bibliothèque Nationale are more voluminous (some 500 MSS), but at the same time include many items which are merely copies of classical works of non-Sudanese origin.

*SOME BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF ARABIC MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL BEARING ON THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN SUDAN*

- Adam 'Abdallah Ilūrī: Ba'd mu'allifāt 'Uthmān wa 'Abdullah [b. Fūdī] (in *Al-Islām fī Nijīrya wa 'Uthmān b. Fūdī*, Cairo, 1370 A. H., p. 41.)
- Bloch, E: Catalogue des manuscrits arabes dans la Bibliothèque Nationale, nouvelles acquisitions 1884-1924 (Paris, 1925), pp. 77-106.
- Cherbonneau, A: Essai sur la littérature arabe au Soudan d'après le Tekmilet ed-dibage d'Ahmed Baba le tombouctien (in *Annales de la Société archéologique de Constantine*, 1854-5). Histoire de la littérature arabe au Soudan (in *Revue Orientale*, 1855-6)
- Destaing, E: Notes sur les manuscrits arabes de l'Afrique occidentale (in *Revue Africaine*, LV, LVI, LVII, 1911-3)
- Dubois, F (with E. Benoist): Notice concernant les manuscrits arabes recueillis par M. Félix Dubois à Tombouctou (in *Tombouctou le mystérieux*, Paris, 1897, pp. 419—20.)
- de Gironcourt, G: Répertoire des manuscrits rapportés du Soudan par la mission de Gironcourt (in *Missions de Gironcourt*, Paris, 1920)
- Hiskett, M: Notes on Research into the Arabic MSS of the Fulani Period (Paper presented to the Second Conference on African History and Archaeology, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1957. Not yet published.) The Kano Chronicle (in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1957)
- Kensdale, W.E.N: Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts preserved in the University Library, Ibadan, Nigeria (Ibadan, 1955-8). Field Notes on the Arabic Literature of the Western Sudan (in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1955, 1956 & 1958)
- Marty, P: Etudes sur l'Islam et les tribus du Soudan (Paris, 1920), tome I, pp. 41-2; tome II, pp. 88-9.
- Massignon, L: La bibliothèque du Sheikh Sidia au Sahara (in *Revue du Monde Musulman*, VIII.)
- Muhammad Bello: Faṣl fil-ishāra ila muṣannafāt ash-sharī'a wa mu'allafātihi al-munifa ['Uthmān b. Fūdī] (in *Infaku'l Mai-suri*, ed. Whitting, London, 1951, p. 187.)
- de Pedrals, D-P: L'Archéologie de l'Afrique noire (Paris, 1950), pp. 69-74.
- Vajda, G: Contribution à la connaissance de la littérature arabe en Afrique Occidentale (in *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, XX, 2, 1950).

Whitting, C.E.J: The Unprinted Indigenous Arabic Literature of Northern Nigeria (in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1943.4)

(A few notices appear scattered in Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, but this work generally gives no indication of the great volume of Arabic writing produced in the Western Sudan.)



## BOOK REVIEWS

THE ROYAL AFRICAN COMPANY. By K.G. Davies. Pp. ix, 390. London: Longmans. 1957. £2—2s.

As Mr. Davies states in the preface, his book should be viewed 'primarily as a contribution to English economic history' and 'much more than is here set forth can be learned about African history from the sources' he has used. Nevertheless, this is one of those rare books which illuminate every topic on which they touch. The scope of his study is as wide as the ramifications of the triangular trade, embracing three continents. After a section which summarises earlier developments in the African trade, there is a valuable discussion of one of Mr. Davies' specialities, joint-stock company finance. Other chapters treat of the Company's monopoly and difficulties with interlopers, shipping, activities in England, Africa and the West Indies. There are useful appendices containing statistics of imports and exports, deliveries and prices of slaves in the West Indies, London sugar prices, a letter of one of the Company's officers on the Gold Coast, and notes on private traders and on the Company's records.

African historians will want to know what the book has to say about the organisation of European trade with West Africa and what light the records of the Company can throw on the life of the West African peoples. The Royal African Company was founded in 1672 and finally wound up in 1752, but between 1713 and 1730 its trading operations were fitful and after 1730 non-existent. Mr. Davies reserves his detailed examination for the period 1672-1713. From 1672 to 1698 the Company held a legal monopoly of the English trade with West Africa despite the inevitable interlopers. From 1698 to 1713 an act of Parliament opened the trade to private merchants who paid a duty of 10% on their exports, as a kind of fee to the Company. After 1713 the private traders dominated the West African trade; their triumph coincided with a significant shift in the base of the trade from London to the outports, in particular, Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow. Their activities were naturally only imperfectly reflected in the records of the Company. Apart from the English customs accounts, the records of this expanding segment of private trade are widely diffused and offer greater problems to the historian than the readily accessible and centralised Company records. It will therefore be some time before a definitive account of the West African trade in the eighteenth century can be achieved.

In chapter 4, 'The Company in England', Mr. Davies' account of imports and exports corrects the widespread belief that slaves were the only considerable commodity in the trade. It is true that about 100,000 slaves were shipped by the Company to the West Indies between 1672 and 1713, but its imports of gold during the same

period produced over half a million guineas at the Mint; it used 500 ships to carry £1½ million worth of manufactured goods to Africa. English manufacturers were encouraged to produce specially for the African market. One would like to know the fate of 32,954 muskets and other firearms, exported by the Company in 1701-1704 (p. 177) as also of the 400,000 knives and 7000 swords supplied by a Birmingham manufacturer (p. 178). The export of West India rum is also noted as a consequence of cut-throat competition amongst European traders on the West African coast (pp. 115-16).

In chapter 6, 'The Company in Africa', there is a very useful account of the commercial regions of West Africa, the terms of trade, the coastal establishments, the relations between the Company and its servants, between them and the other Europeans on the coast. Finally there is a suggestive but impressionistic summary of the position of the Company's officers in relation to the coastal tribes. It is in this field that most hope lies of using Company records to check, date and clarify oral traditions in order to produce a reasonably secure description of the peoples of the coast and perhaps of the hinterland. Work of this kind has already begun at the University College of Ghana, but it should be noted that only in Ghana, the Gambia and, perhaps, at Whydah in Dahomey were Company posts permanent enough to produce a close association of factors and African middlemen and a corresponding interest in the details of tribal society and politics. For the rest of the coast the trade was conducted from ships not forts or factories. Here we have to rely on the less satisfactory evidence of ships' journals and travellers' reports. It is clear, however, that even here the available evidence has still to be fully explored.

Enough has been said of this stimulating and closely-packed study to indicate that Mr. Davies has made one of the most important contributions to English and African commercial history in recent years and, in so doing, he has rendered some useful assistance to the historian of the West African peoples.

Victor Treadwell.

In a great work of this sort there are bound to be many shortcomings, more in fact than one reviewer can find and check in a reasonable time. If this were not so we should have had to wait still longer for this book and we would be much the poorer for the delay. One takes no pleasure in finding fault with Professor Alimen and what follows is only intended as a guide to the reader, and perhaps as a stimulant to the author. It is proposed to concentrate on those sections that are of most interest to the readers of this Journal, while referring the reader to other reviewers for further criticism.

West Africanists will be a little dismayed at the somewhat sketchy treatment of their section in Chapter VII, "West Africa between the Sahara and the Gulf of Guinea", which covers only ten pages. One gets the impression that British sources have been largely ignored (though admittedly of small account until very recently) and that only Shaw's monograph and Fagg's note occurring together in P.P.S. 1944 have come to the author's notice. It is surprising and unfortunate that Fagg's subsequent paper in *Man* (1946.48) escaped notice, as likewise his more recent ones. Even allowing for this there was no excuse for printing a distribution map of the Chellean and Acheulian in Africa (at the end of the book) in which Cleavers are shown to be non-existent in the West since Balfour published the occurrence of these in Northern Nigeria as long ago as 1934, in *Man*. Prof. Alimen's suggestion that tectonic movements took place in the West in ancient times would be strengthened by Migeod's note in *Man* (1917.90) on Ghana, and other evidence gradually accumulating. On the Cameroons, the sparsity of reliable information seems to be emphasised by the half page devoted to it and it is to be hoped that properly conducted work will find its way soon to this area, which may prove more important than it seems at present. In the short "Conclusions" at the end of the chapter Prof. Alimen rightly points out that the Tropical Forest spread far north of its present line, but to almost completely deny the existence of Chellean and Acheulian industries is clearly wrong, though because these *did* exist in the Bauchi Plateau zone we should not necessarily assume a wider occupation, since it is probable that this upland country was especially habitable at that time, as apparently it was subsequently, until about 200 A.D. In the brief bibliography, Braunnholtz' christian names are given in full—the only one to receive this treatment—which seems a little extraordinary, and Shaw's initials are of course C.T., not G.F. Elsewhere, in the chapter on "African Art", there is a most useful account of the rupestral paintings and engravings throughout the Continent preceeded by an excellent summary of their means of approximate dating; but here no mention is made of the discoveries in the Northern Region and the distribution map is blank for this area. Under the heading of Sculpture, the author fails to describe



adequately the Tabelballet stones (in the Sahara) carved with representations of the human face, giving their number as six, when there were nine and missing the most significant fact - that they formed a *circle*. Other similar stones found in the same area are mentioned, but the wide occurrence of stone circles in West Africa is ignored (e.g. in Gambia, published in J.R.A.I. 1923), nor are these accounted for in the following chapter on "African Megaliths". Fagg's discoveries of what seems to be part of the great 'megalithic' complex in the Northern Region have also been missed although announced at the Third Pan-African Congress on Prehistory in 1955.

It is clear from the text that the book was still being written in 1956, so that for this later, English, edition some of the above omissions seem unwarranted. Nevertheless this is a magnificent book, especially valuable for its sound geological approach to the establishment of chronology. There is also a valuable chapter on "Prehistoric Man in Africa" and the treatment of the stone industries of the African Continent is almost, if not quite, exhaustive. In addition its four hundred and forty odd pages are copiously illustrated with drawings, maps and tables, and there are twenty five plates. We need not—and should not—be deterred by the shortcomings of Chapter VII, for after all we ought already to be thoroughly conversant with our own ground, so to speak; it is therefore as a source of reference on Africa as a whole that this book will be most useful. Both this and later editions, which will surely be called for, should remain in constant use alongside later works of synthesis, such as the impatiently awaited History of Africa being prepared by my friend the American Negro professor, William Leo Hansberry of Howard University. Many would say that such works are not yet justified in the present state of knowledge; to this I cannot agree, since they help immensely in pointing out the gaps to all of us and thus to furthering research in the right direction. The broad view is all too rare in our field of study and difficult to achieve for most, without the aid of those whose gift it is to interpret it. I think "The Prehistory of Africa" is cheap at the price.

Robert A. Kennedy.

*\*Contributions to this journal are welcome and should be sent to the  
Hon. Literary Editor, J. D. Omer-Cooper, at University College,  
Ibadan*

